

A Study of Olmec Sculptural Chronology

Susan Milbrath

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Introduction

AS THE EARLIEST known Mesoamerican art style, Olmec art has been the subject of much study over the last three decades. Monumental sculpture is one of the most important facets of Olmec art, and a number of authors have focused primarily on this aspect (Clewlow 1974; Clewlow and Corson 1968; Clewlow *et al.* 1967; Cook de Leonard 1959; de la Fuente 1972a, 1972b, 1973; Heizer 1967; Smith 1963; Stirling 1943, 1955, 1965). Many studies have described adequately the principal stylistic features of Olmec monumental sculpture, but have failed to organize the sculpture on the basis of formal similarities, aside from the primary categories of altars, stelae, etc. Careful analysis of the formal qualities of the sculpture, including modeling, composition, sculptural detail, and body posture, reveal similarities that cross-cut the categories now in use. This is true of the altar figures, free-standing sculptures, and some of the stelae. Such a study permits organization of the sculptures into a number of distinct stylistic groups; these groups ultimately provide the framework for a seriation of the monuments.

Chronology is one of the least understood aspects of Olmec art; scholars have pointed, in particular, to the need for a study of the stylistic development of Olmec monumental sculpture (Baudez 1971: 80; Bernal 1971: 33). A few studies have suggested possible chronological developments for Olmec sculpture (Bruggerman and Hers 1970; Clewlow 1974; Coe 1968b; Covarrubias 1957; Medellín Zenil 1960; Kubler 1962; Wicke 1971). But the conclusions reached by these authors remain rather speculative, owing to their methodology and lack of supportive evidence. Although a detailed analysis of their work

is not presented here, a previous study by this author (Pelliza n.d.: 51–73) argues that they either restricted their investigation to pure stylistic analysis or made their evaluations solely on the basis of archaeological data. Although a few investigators primarily interested in stylistic analysis have used some archaeological evidence to establish a broad chronological framework, those authors who have based their conclusions about Olmec sculptural chronology on archaeological information tend to disregard the stylistic data. It seems clear that an accurate seriation of Olmec sculpture cannot be achieved by either method alone; a combination of the two approaches must be employed in order to take full advantage of the total range of data available.

A number of authors maintain that integrated sculptural styles are represented at different major Olmec sites, and have established their sculptural sequence by simply seriating the sites on the basis of general archaeological information (Clewlow 1974; Kubler 1962; Wicke 1971). Clewlow (1974: 60–3) proposes three chronologically distinct sculptural schools centered at the major Olmec sites; the earliest is the Laguna de los Cerros School, followed by the San Lorenzo and the La Venta Schools. Since many monuments remain unexcavated at these sites (and many monuments were destroyed in the Pre-Columbian epoch), it seems risky to propose a unified sculptural style for any of the sites. For example, Clewlow's (1974: 53) Laguna de los Cerros School is based on three seated figures; the discovery of only one or two stylistically distinct sculptures at the site would completely destroy the integrity of

the school. Further, the archaeological evidence reviewed below suggests that all three sites were occupied contemporaneously. Of the twelve traits Clewlow (1974: Table 10) analyzes to define the separation between the three schools, four relate to post-carving mutilation and therefore have nothing to do with style, and only three are purely stylistic. The remaining five are iconographic traits, which reflect regional variations rather than chronological change.¹ More important, Clewlow has not per-

ceived a number of stylistic relationships that cross-cut his schools. These stylistic relationships are believed to be more significant than any iconographic differences that may exist between the three sites. It is not the type of costuming or paraphernalia, but the manner in which it is represented that is paramount in a stylistic seriation; the comparative modeling and composition of the feature must be viewed in conjunction with the overall modeling of the figure itself.

Methodology

ALTHOUGH IT IS TRUE that the total range of Olmec sculpture is not known today, and may be lost forever, owing to the systematic destruction and mutilation of monuments, a number of sculptures can be grouped together, on the basis of stylistic similarities, forming several distinct groups. These groups probably reflect the general chronological trends in Olmec sculpture. Stylistic analysis demonstrates that these groups are homogeneous entities; however, the chronological ordering of the material must be based on specific evidence from the archaeological record.

The stylistic groups are formulated on the basis of Olmec anthropomorphic sculpture from the heartland area (Fig. 1; southern Veracruz and western Tabasco). Olmec and Olmec-related sculptures from other areas will be analyzed separately, since regional stylistic variations may be evident among these sculptures. Analysis of the stylistic groups focuses initially on seated figures carved in the round. These sculptures are the most common type of representation among Olmec figural sculptures,

and should, therefore, best exemplify the major stylistic groups. Figures mounted on bases and high-relief figures attached to background supports, such as altars and some stelae, form the other two major categories correlated with the stylistic groups based on seated figures. The analysis of low-relief figures is treated separately since the principles of relief carving differ somewhat from sculpture in the round.

The stylistic analysis of the figural sculpture groups is based on such traits as degree of overall modeling (roundness or flatness), treatment of detail (modeled three-dimensionally or incised), and body postures and proportions. Since so many sculptures lack heads or have mutilated faces (part of the ritual destruction of monuments), analysis of sculptural technique for comparative purposes must concentrate on the bodies. Compositional elements analyzed in formulating the stylistic groups include the relationship of figure to background in the case of altars and other reliefs, and of figure to figure in group scenes. Size does not appear to be an important factor differentiating the stylistic groups. There is great size variation among the monuments; occasionally sculptures that appear to be duplicates differ greatly in dimensions (for example, the Los Soldados Monument and San Lorenzo Monument 37

¹ Proskouriakoff (1950: 2-3) found, in analyzing Maya sculptural chronology, that regionalism was often a factor in the selection of motifs, but different motifs displayed parallel stylistic changes through time.

—Figs. 19, 20—measure 130 centimeters and 60 centimeters high respectively).

The results of the stylistic analysis are three major groups for sculpture in the round and high relief, two of which are tentatively subdivided. Major low-relief carvings are assigned to one of the three groups, or to a fourth group composed exclusively of relief. A combination of numbers and letters has been chosen to designate each group, though descriptive titles will also be suggested.

The chronological ordering of the groups is established by defining the chronological position of a number of key monuments. A certain range of dates can be suggested for many sculptures based on the Early Formative (1150–900 B.C.) archaeological context of San Lorenzo sculptures. A few monuments are found in unique archaeological contexts that allow for more precise dating of these pieces and other stylistically related sculptures of the same group. In addition, the archaeological associations of Olmec-related monuments from beyond the heartland area provide some useful correlations. The chronological position of a number of Olmec ceramic motifs is also relevant to dating certain monuments depicting similar motifs, since it is likely that their use on monumental sculpture is

roughly contemporary with the period of their popularity in ceramics.

In attempting a chronology using material from over ten geographically dispersed sites in the heartland area (over 2500 square miles), a primary problem is the possibility of regional variations. Nevertheless, the position taken here is that the changing canons of style were adopted simultaneously throughout the heartland region. This is supported by the fact that a number of duplicate sculptures have been found at different sites; Heizer (1971: 52–3) has even proposed that Olmec sculpture may have been carved in one place and dispatched to separate sites. The evidence for sculptural workshops at any of the Olmec sites is very scanty, so it has been suggested that the monuments were carved in the Tuxtla Mountains (the principal Olmec basalt source), and then transported to their respective sites (Clewlow 1970: 36–7). If this were true, it would raise the possibility of a central atelier for Olmec sculpture in the highlands. Such an atelier would not be easily discovered, since the Tuxtla mountain range has been a center of volcanic activity for many centuries; nevertheless, several Olmec sculptures have been discovered in the heart of this area.

The Stylistic Groups

A DETAILED ANALYSIS of all the sculptures attributed to the various sculptural groups has been presented elsewhere (Pelliza n.d.), but several representative examples of each group are described here to exemplify the principal stylistic features.

Group Ia Seated Figures

The seated figures assigned to this group are: La Venta Monument 23; Laguna de los Cerros Monuments 6 and 19; and San Lorenzo Monuments 11, 34, and 47 (Table II; Figs. 2–7; de la Fuente 1973:

Láms. 110, 136).² Sculptures exhibiting the greatest degree of overall naturalism in terms of pose and modeling of anatomic and costume detail are characteristic of Group Ia. Costume detail is often intricate, including knots, bows, and tassels, and is usually rendered with an interest in three-dimensional overlapping planes. Musculature on the arms

² Laguna de los Cerros Monument 19 (Medellín Zenil 1960: Lám. 24) is a standing figure, but is best grouped with the seated figures, since it is carved in the round, with a cape wrapped around the back, as is San Lorenzo Monument 47.

and chest is well modeled. Legs are massive and rounded, modeled with tapering calves; and the feet (when present) are well rounded. Hands are carefully executed with modeled fingers. Areas between the arms and chest and the legs are deeply carved, heightening the effect of three-dimensionality.

La Venta Monument 23. Monument 23 (Fig. 2; Drucker *et al.*: Pl. 52) is representative of the Group Ia style. The figure's cross-legged pose seems timeless and immobile, yet clearly lifelike. The pectoral muscles of the chest bulge with corporeal reality. The fleshy, rounded thighs balance the weight of the chest. The arms were probably extended free of the body, except for the right hand which may have been attached to the knee (where there is evidence of breakage).

Careful attention to costume detail adds to the total effect of naturalism. But in no case does ornamental costume detail overwhelm the importance of the human figure in sculptures of this group. The figure wears a rounded pectoral overlapping an elaborate triple-stranded chain. The belt is rendered in great detail, with multiple pendant bands and a square brooch overlapping a broad band. Short pants are depicted in very low relief under the belt (in the side view), whereas the genital patch is in higher relief and is crisply carved. The back of the figure shows a simple squared headdress pendant and a wide belt, both carved with crisp edges; but the belt appears simplified, and the belt knot is incised and lacks the three-dimensionality of ornament in the frontal view. Focus on the frontal view is characteristic of Olmec sculpture; this is notable particularly in the highly naturalistic colossal heads, which have minimal costume detail at the back, or are only roughly carved in the rear view.

Laguna de los Cerros Monument 6. Monument 6 (Fig. 3; de la Fuente 1973: No. 102) is a sensitively modeled torso that correlates well with Group Ia, despite its fragmentary condition. The chest musculature is carefully modeled, as are the costume details. The figure's collarbone is delicately modeled, and is framed by double cords with pendant tassels attaching the cape around the neck. The rear

view is unusually detailed, and shows a headdress pendant and a cape with cut-out shoulders overlapping the belt. The vertical breaks at the base of the figure indicate that the legs were attached in a seated position, but the exact pose is unclear.

San Lorenzo Monument 47. Monument 47 (Fig. 4) also represents a figure wearing an intricately knotted cape, and has modeled, although less corpulent, pectoral muscles like those of Laguna de los Cerros Monument 6. Fortunately, the arms have survived, because they were attached along the figure's torso. The biceps bulge realistically, and the forearms taper gracefully. The position of the hands is naturalistic, as are the details of modeling; the rounded fingers are of graduated lengths, the middle finger being longest. The hands are cupped over the head of a naturalistic snake. Although the legs are mutilated, the remaining knee is carved in the rounded, fleshy manner characteristic of Group Ia. A simple cape in the form of a half-circle completely covers the back of the figure. Tucked under the arms there is an elongated element, which could be either the folds of the cape or the snake's body. This element and the cape fastening reflect the interest in layered modeling common in sculptures of this group.

San Lorenzo Monument 34. Monument 34 (Figs. 5–7) depicts a unique kneeling figure that apparently once had moveable arms attached to huge disk sockets. These sockets are so large that they replace or obscure what would have been the shoulders and chest. Nevertheless, other features allow placement of this figure in Group Ia. There is great emphasis on three-dimensional anatomic and costume detail. The crisply carved loincloth overlaps the belt, which, in turn, overlaps the lower edge of the chest ornament. This round pectoral is modeled with a low-relief star design, and overlaps three-dimensionally the chain that suspends it, as on La Venta Monument 23. The tasseled knee-band on the figure's leg reflects a fascination with intricate knots and fastenings characteristic of Group Ia. Like La Venta Monument 23, the figure wears short pants under its belt. Numerous planes are established by the modeling of ornament in the frontal view; on the back of the figure, however, the panel covering

the buttocks is rendered in extremely low relief. Similarly, the body modeling is more elaborate in the frontal view; this is particularly notable when comparing the roundly modeled left foot, with its delicate toenails and anklebone, to the flattened right foot folded along the buttocks. The pose is more dynamic and extended than the cross-legged figures of this group, but it remains naturalistic rather than contorted.

Group Ib Seated Figures

Figures assigned to this group are: Laguna de los Cerros Monuments 3 and 11, and La Venta Monument 31 (Table II; Figs. 8–11). Sculptures of this group are naturalistic, but reflect a reduced interest in elaboration of anatomic and costume detail. Chest musculature is not highly developed, and arms tend to be less carefully modeled than in Group Ia sculptures. Hands and feet have not survived in most sculptures of this subgroup.

Laguna de los Cerros Monument 3. Monument 3 (Figs. 8, 9), although quite fragmentary, is representative of the Group Ib style. The overall impression is one of naturalism; however, the intricate detail of Group Ia sculptures seems to be lacking. The figure is well modeled, with rounded contours and some indication of chest musculature. A rounded genital patch, unlike the crisply carved types of Group Ia, is the only costume detail in the frontal view. The rear view has slightly more detail, since it depicts a wide belt, but this consists of parallel bands rendered by incision and extremely low relief. The belt is tied with a bow at the back, but it is rather simple compared to Group Ia fastenings. There are traces of a headdress pendant on the back, as on several Group Ia monuments, but it is incised rather than modeled. A depression along the back suggests the backbone, an unusual feature, since virtually all the sculptures have flat, planar backs. The arms and legs appear to have been rounded, and the breakage of the legs suggests that the figure was seated with one leg raised and the other crossed in front.

Laguna de los Cerros Monument 11. Monument 11

(Fig. 10) probably depicts a pose similar to that of Monument 3. Both arms remain intact, attached along the side of the figure. In general, the arms of Group I figures must have been rather delicate, since the only remaining examples are those that are attached to the side of the torso. The modeling of the arms on Monument 11 reflects the rather subtle differences between Groups Ia and Ib. In contrast to Group Ia sculptures, the arms of this figure seem less rounded and muscular. The fingers are not rendered in detail, although the shape and position of the hands is naturalistic; the chest muscles are rather flat compared to those of Group Ia sculptures. The figure, lacking the complexity of Group Ia costuming, wears a low-relief belt and a rounded genital patch like that of Monument 3.

La Venta Monument 31. Monument 31 (Fig. 11) is a figure with an open pose revealing a rounded genital patch like that of the other Group Ib sculptures. No other traces of costume detail remain. The figure is leaning forward, an unusual posture among Group I seated figures, but a characteristic pose among Group I altar figures (Figs. 30, 32). The rounded, fleshy quality of the remaining thigh generally links it to Group I, but the open pose and reduced interest in anatomic and costume detail relates it specifically to Group Ib. The right leg is folded along the figure's side, and terminates in a broad tubular element. Striations down the back appear to be the result of post-carving mutilation.

Group IIa Seated Figures

Monuments assigned to this group are: La Venta Monuments 8, 10, 11, 30, 73; Tres Zapotes Monument M; and the monuments from Arroyo Sonso, San Martín Pajapan, Cruz del Milagro, and Cuauhtotoloapan Viejo (Table II; Figs. 12–15; de la Fuente 1973: Láms. 23, 41, 82, 90; Stirling 1943: Pl. 11b). Seated figures of Group IIa are carved in an angular manner, and most frequently are posed seated cross-legged, leaning forward with the arms extended like rigid parallel bars in front of the

body. Costuming is not complex; it is rendered by incision and low-relief, without any great emphasis on three-dimensionality. The figures are not as delicately carved as Group I sculptures, and often appear to be more massive. Chest musculature is absent or only vaguely suggested; arms and legs are carved in an angular fashion; hands and feet are flattened and squared off at the tips, and the digits are incised rather than modeled.

San Martín Pajapan Monument. The San Martín sculpture (Fig. 12) illustrates the tendency to render anatomic form in the squared, planar fashion characteristic of Group IIa. The arms are attached to the shoulders in an angular manner. There is no real sense of musculature or rounding in the delineation of the arms; rather, they are depicted like rigid, squared blocks. The figure grasps a ceremonial bar, as does San Lorenzo Monument 11 (de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 136) of Group Ia, but the bar is angular instead of round, and the hands are planar with the fingers deeply incised rather than modeled. A flat, incised pectoral hangs down from the shoulders, obscuring the chest. Costume detail on the body—for example, the belt and arm bands—is rendered by planar low relief or pure incision. The rear view of the figure depicts an incised belt with a pendant loincloth, but there is no real sense of three-dimensional overlapping in the execution of this feature. The posture of the figure is dynamic and open, like that of some Group Ib sculptures; however, the chest and genital areas are not modeled. The leaning posture is very characteristic of Group IIa sculptures.

The facial modeling suggests more naturalistic anatomic detail and greater sensitivity than the body. But, this is invariably the case among Olmec sculptures that retain their heads. The face and headdress seem to be the focus of the artist and are usually rendered in great detail. Clewlow (1970: Pl. 1b) believes that La Venta Monument 44 duplicates the head of the San Martín figure. Since this sculpture is from the Tuxtla mountain area, over eighty air miles from La Venta, the similarity of the two monuments argues strongly for a unified sculptural tradition in the heartland Olmec area.

Cuauhtotolapan Viejo Monument. This recently discovered human figure (Fig. 13) is rendered in the angular fashion typical of Group IIa. The figure leans forward with its arms stiffly extended like parallel bars in front of the body; it has crossed legs in the form of a solid block, and squared feet with incised toes. The only costume element is a simple low-relief pectoral ornament.

La Venta Monuments 8 and 10. Both of these La Venta figures (Figs. 14, 15) have angular shoulders, rigid arms, block-like crossed legs, and planar hands and feet with incised fingers or toes—all elements characteristic of Group IIa. Monument 8 is depicted without any body ornament or costume. The Monument 10 figure wears a low-relief belt with incised lines. In both cases, the faces are grotesque rather than human; however, the bodies are rendered in a fashion identical to that of Group IIa human figures. This would seem to indicate that the iconographic differences are often subordinated to the stylistic canons of body modeling.

Group IIb Seated Figures

Monuments in this group are: San Lorenzo Monuments 10, 12, 26, 37, and 52; La Venta Monuments 5, 9, 70, and 72; and the Los Soldados Monument and Rancho Los Idolos Monument 1 (Table II; Figs. 16–22; de la Fuente 1973: No. 151, Láms. 17, 80, 81). The carving style of Group IIb is very similar to that of Group IIa. The subdivision is based on the comparative tendency towards erect posture and compact poses in Group IIb—features which may or may not have chronological significance.

La Venta Monument 9, Rancho Los Idolos Monument 1, and San Lorenzo Monument 12. Several figures exemplify the rather subtle distinction between Groups IIa and IIb; they are comparable to the figures in Group IIa in carving style, but have erect and closed postures (Figs. 16–18). Belts and loincloths are incised or in very low relief. Two of the figures wear capes, but there is no indication that they were attached by complex fastenings, as in Group Ia sculptures—indeed, such details would

seem most out of character on these monuments. Fingers and toes are rendered by incision, and there is an unnaturalistic tendency to square off the tips of hands and feet. The arms are drawn in close to the body, with the exception of Monument 9, which has rather awkward cut-out holes between the arms and body. Although Monument 9 is clearly an anthropomorphic jaguar, the other two monuments may be human figures, for they wear capes, a costume element that is most often linked with human iconography. A hole is carved into the lap of Monument 9. Rancho Los Idolos Monument 1 has a slight depression in the lap, but the area between the legs is not carved out to reveal the rounded interior of the thighs, as is the case with Group Ia seated cross-legged figures (Fig. 2). A chubby baby obscures the lap area of the Monument 12 figure. The baby has unusually rounded legs, but clearly this is related to iconographic dictates rather than to the general tendency towards rounded forms seen in Group I. Rounded, swollen legs are depicted on Group II altars portraying dwarf figures (Fig. 41), and it is possible that the Monument 12 baby is related to these dwarf figures.

Clellow (1974: 46) believes that Monument 12 was carved by the same artist who sculpted San Lorenzo Monument 47 (Fig. 4). He thinks that the monuments are similar in their "casual approach to the subject matter and its positioning and the use of the cape as sort of a half shell around the back of the central figure (Clellow 1974: 46)." But the cape as a half-circle or shell is present also on Laguna de los Cerros Monument 19 (Medellín Zenil 1960: Lám. 25), and it is hard to discern what is casual in the approach to Monument 47, which seems rather carefully and naturalistically rendered. If "casual" means relaxed and naturalistic, Monument 47 would fit this description, but Monument 12 certainly does not achieve that level of naturalism. The legs are block-like, and the rendering of the fingers and toes only rudimentary when compared to those of Monument 47. The pose of Monument 12 is naturalistic, but many Group II monuments depict postures that are anatomically correct and therefore

naturalistic; the modeling details of the body, however, reveal a lack of great interest in naturalism.

San Lorenzo Monument 37 and the Los Soldados Monument. Although these two sculptures represent tusked creatures (Figs. 19, 20), the pose and carving style relate them to anthropomorphic sculptures of Group IIb. The limbs are carved in an angular, blocky manner. The pose is compact, with the front legs drawn close to the chest of the figure. The details of the tusks are rendered by incision and low relief, with no emphasis on three-dimensional overlapping planes. Monument 37 displays a fair amount of detail in the depiction of toes with crescent-shaped toenails, but the overall shape of the paws is planar and squared. Although the Los Soldados Monument represents an identical theme, the figure is twice as large as the San Lorenzo sculpture. Additional variations are seen in the treatment of the body. The paws are large and curved, with toes depicted by deep parallel incision. The figure is seated with one leg folded back and the other crossed in front, whereas the San Lorenzo figure is posed in a crouching position. Monument 37 lacks a head, and the Los Soldados Monument is broken away above the nose.

San Lorenzo Monument 10. Monument 10 (Fig. 21) is an anthropomorphic jaguar holding cestus-like objects.³ The pose is compact; the limbs are massive and angular. Although the biceps are rounded along the inside edge, this effect is created by deep incision rather than by three-dimensional modeling. Like several other Group IIb sculptures, the figure's hands are placed up against the chest. San Lorenzo Monument 26 (de la Fuente 1973: No. 151) also depicts a figure holding cestus objects up to its chest, and, although quite mutilated, it appears to be carved in the angular, compact style of Group IIb.

San Lorenzo Monument 52. Monument 52 (Fig.

³ The term "jaguar" may be inappropriate for these composite creatures that combine traits of feline, serpent, and toad.

22) depicts an anthropomorphic jaguar with arms resting on bent knees that are tucked up to the chest, a posture identical to that of several other Group IIb monuments (de la Fuente 1973: No. 151; Láms. 80, 81). The pose is compressed, the limbs are angular, and the toes and fingers are incised and squared off at the tips, like other monuments of this group. The back of the figure, however, was hollowed out as a conduit for water in a drain system laid down in the San Lorenzo Phase (Coe 1968b: 55). Despite the differences in function, it clearly reflects the stylistic tenets of Group IIb.

Group II Figures Mounted on Bases

Two figures discussed in this section appear related to the seated figures described above, but are depicted mounted on substantial bases. Tenochtitlán Monument 1 and Laguna de los Cerros Monument 20 (Figs. 23, 24) are similar representations of a kneeling figure seated on a reclining figure. The upper figure leans forward and appears to have had its arms stretched down in front of the body, planted on the lower figure's chest. The open, leaning pose, with the right leg tucked up and the left folded back, is particularly like that of the San Martín Pajapan sculpture of Group IIa (Fig. 12); however, the lower figure has a compressed block-like appearance, probably related to its function as a base support.

Monument 1 is carved with low-relief costume ornament that lacks the complexity and three-dimensionality of Group Ia costuming, and seems more strongly related to the Group II style. The angular carving style links the figure more securely to the Group II style. The legs are flattened against the torso, and the area between the calf and thigh of the raised leg is not carved out, in contrast to Group Ia representations like San Lorenzo Monument 34 (Fig. 6). Like most Group II sculptures, the figure has planar, block-like feet with incised toes. Michael Coe (personal communication) believes that the Tenochtitlán and Potrero Nuevo monuments were probably moved from the site of San Lorenzo;

this sculpture may, therefore, be a rare example of the Group IIa style from San Lorenzo.

Laguna de los Cerros Monument 20 seems to be a rough copy of the Tenochtitlán sculpture. Most anatomic detail and ornament is depicted by a combination of low relief and rude incision. The limbs are flattened against the body, and the remaining foot is similar to that of Monument 1. The figure wears a low-relief pectoral identical to that of San Lorenzo Monument 52 and La Venta Monument 30, both of Group II (Fig. 22).

Group III Seated and Mounted Figures

Monuments assigned to this group are: La Venta Monuments A, 21, 40, 74, and 75; Tres Zapotes Monument J; and Cerro el Vigía Monument 3 (Table II; Figs. 15–29). The carving style of Group III monuments is extremely blocky, and little or no anatomic and costume detail is depicted. Figures of this group are most often mounted on base supports. Some classical Olmec themes are employed, but the effect is different, owing to the rude carving style.

La Venta Monument 75. Monument 75 (Fig. 25) represents a figure seated on a reclining figure like Tenochtitlán Monument 1 and Laguna de los Cerros Monument 20 of Group II. The carving style, however, is quite different from that of those monuments. The arms are thick, squared blocks, and the hands are only barely incised to delineate fingers. The wide area of attachment between the forearms and the knees is unlike Group IIa monuments posed in a similar fashion (Figs. 14, 15), particularly since the separation between the arms and knees is obscured. The arms of Monuments 1 and 20 were originally well separated from the knees, and planted forward on the lower figure's chest. The La Venta figure appears to wear a low-relief belt, but no other costume detail is evident. The left leg is crossed in front, but is really no more than a solid block, as is the right leg, except for a vague indication of the separation between the calf and thighs. The base element is a solid block with some faint

traces of low-relief carving, probably intended to represent a reclining figure. A wide, curved element in low relief on the upper figure's back is probably a tail, but it is depicted as an outgrowth of the base figure, creating the impression of a lack of separation between the two figures. Similarly, the upper figure's blocky hands appear to merge into the base. This is unlike the Group II mounted figures (Figs. 23, 24), which have fairly sharp angles of juncture between the figure and base.

La Venta Monuments 21 and 40. Group III includes the only known examples of figures mounted on pedestal platform bases. Monument 40 (Fig. 26) depicts a full figure on a pedestal, whereas only the upper torso is represented on Monument 21 (Fig. 27). Both are crude and angular, and this quality is extreme in the case of Monument 21, which has arms ending in rough tapering blocks. The hands of the Monument 40 figure are depicted as flattened blocks at a right angle to the arms, much as in Monument 75. Although the fingers are incised, the feet are formed by a plain block shape. The angles joining the figure to the base are softened and indistinct on Monument 40, and in the case of Monument 21 the figure almost appears to merge into the base.

La Venta Monument 74. Monument 74 (Fig. 28) represents a standing jaguar figure that is practically a low-relief carved block. There is virtually no extension into space, and the carving is extremely angular. The hands and feet are flattened and roughly incised to indicate the digits. It is possible that the figure may be squatting, with its knees tucked under its chin, rather than standing; the details of body modeling are so indistinct that even the pose is obscured. The separation between the figure and its base is similarly indistinct, creating the impression that they are a single element.

Tres Zapotes Monument J. Monument J (Fig. 29) is a seated figure holding a ceremonial bar, a theme represented in both Groups I and II (Fig. 12: de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 136). The carving style, however, is in sharp contrast to sculptures of those groups. The legs are a rough block, and the arms

are angular tubes with blunt endings. The ceremonial bar is indistinct, and appears to merge into the figure's lap.

Altars with Seated Figures: Groups I–III

All the major sculptural groups defined on the basis of seated figures in the round are also represented in the altar series. Study of the altars reveals some trends in terms of overall composition that are not evident among the seated figures.

Group Ia. La Venta Altars 4 and 5 (Figs. 30–33) correlate well with Group Ia seated figures (Figs. 2–7). They represent sensitively carved figures with rounded shoulders, modeled pectoral and bicep muscles, and carefully modeled hands. The Altar 5 figure holds a baby, and wears a broad collar and a rounded pendant, which obscures most of the chest. The modeling of the shoulders, arm muscles, and the tapering rounded fingers recall San Lorenzo Monument 47 of Group Ia. The Altar 4 figure wears a heavy layered collar and a complex pectoral with overlapping pendant elements. The chest muscles bulge, and the abdomen is flattened below the rib cage. There is a high degree of naturalism in the modeling of the hands, particularly notable in such details as the cleft in the palm of the right hand, which contrasts with the flattened treatment of the inverted palm on the San Martín Pajapan figure of Group IIa (Fig. 12). The figure's foot is rounded, although not as carefully modeled as the hands. On Altar 5 the foot is barely visible, but appears to be rounded; in general, Group I figures seem to have rounded feet (that is, the few examples that remain intact), as opposed to the flattened treatment of the foot in Group II.

Both altar figures evoke a sense of dynamic tension through the compositional contrast of the rounded human form leaning out from a backdrop of hollow space framed by the niche and flat altar face. The Altar 4 figure is placed farther back in the niche than is the figure of Altar 5. The niche is deeply carved out around both figures, giving the impression that they are seated in open space, rather

than attached to the altar. San Lorenzo Monument 20 (de la Fuente 1973: No. 145), although quite mutilated, appears to duplicate the La Venta Altar 5 figure. The altar ledge, however, is placed just above the figure's headdress, as in Altar 4. The remaining foot is roundly modeled, suggesting stylistic parallels with the Group Ia altar figures.

Group Ib. San Lorenzo Monument 14 (Figs. 34–36) represents a figure holding a rope, which was probably wrapped around the altar base and attached to the relief figure on the side, as on La Venta Altar 4. Although the legs and hands of the main figure are mutilated, the chest area and one arm remain intact. The chest is sensitively modeled with rounded pectoral muscles and a flattened abdomen; the carving of the arm is not so delicate. The arm is rounded, but lacks the modeled biceps characteristic of Group Ia. In addition, the costume ornament does not seem so complex; the low-relief belt has four squared panels, but they are not layered in a three-dimensional fashion. The figure appears to compare better with monuments of Group Ib, such as Laguna de los Cerros Monument 11 (Fig. 10). Unlike Group Ia altars, the niche is rather shallow and outlines the shoulders of the figure. The repetition of a Group Ia altar theme in Group Ib might seem to suggest that the subdivision of Group I does not have chronological significance. On the other hand, many Olmec themes (figures holding babies, ceremonial bars, etc.) are repeated in all three major stylistic groups, and it appears that artists reused themes, but interpreted them within the current stylistic norms.

Laguna de los Cerros Monument 5 (Fig. 37) is quite comparable to San Lorenzo Monument 14; both figures wear wide belts and identical trapezoidal pectorals, and are modeled in a similar fashion. Both altars reflect a relationship between the figure and background that is different from that seen in Group Ia altars. The niche is smaller, outlining the torso, and the face is now placed upon the altar surface, rather than inside the niche opening. The altar ledge appears uncomfortably low, flattening the headdress on Monument 14, and pushed down

behind the figure's head on Monument 5. In general, the composition seems more crowded, even though there is less ornamental detail than on Group Ia altars. The figures do not project three-dimensionally from the niche hollow as on Group Ia altars; instead they are in relief against the shallow backdrop of the niche and altar face. Monument 5 has a more dynamic posture than the San Lorenzo altar figure, and probably was originally carved in a position much like that of the San Martín Pajapan figure (Fig. 12).

Group II. Although La Venta Altar 2 (Fig. 38) is poorly preserved, the overall carving of the figure indicates that it was not as sensitively modeled as Group I altars. The arms are only minimally separated from the body, and there is no real fullness of the chest or shoulders to indicate musculature. Like Group Ib altars, the figure is cramped by the ledge and small niche opening, and is depicted in relief, rather than modeled three-dimensionally. The crossed legs are treated in a cursory manner, lacking the rounded modeling and the sharp angles of juncture between the legs characteristic of Group I. This feature, along with the lack of musculature and costume detail, suggests placement in Group II, possibly Group IIb since the figure's pose is compact and erect.

Group III. Like other sculptures of Group III, the arms and legs on Altar 6 (Fig. 39) are treated as rough blocks, with no attempt to detail anatomic features. Even the face, which is usually the most carefully rendered feature in Olmec art, is rather rudely carved. The nose is triangular, and the eyes are wide and blank, lacking lids. The lower portion of the face is eroded, but the figure appears to wear a mask with a small face over its mouth, a feature that is unique among the present corpus of Olmec sculptures. Costuming is minimal, but some unusual elements are depicted, such as heavy shoulder pads and a helmet with a median crest. Like many of the Group III sculptures, the figure is mounted on a heavy base or ledge. La Venta Altar 3, tentatively placed in Group Ib (Table II; Pelliza n.d.: 119; de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 3a), also has a figure seated

on a ledge; but the ledge is flush with the altar face, forming a rectangular niche or opening, rather than a salient base for the figure. The upper ledge on Altar 6 is even lower than on Group Ib and II altars, and seems to crowd the shoulders of the figure. The niche opening characteristic of Group I and II altars is absent. The block-like form of the figure and the lack of sharp angles at the juncture between the figure and the altar face make it appear to blend into the squared form of the altar block.

Drucker, Heizer, and Squier (1959: 201) note the stylistic similarity of Altar 6 and La Venta Monument 21 (Fig. 27), both classified here in Group III. Stirling (1965: 730) thinks that Altar 6 represents either an early or decadent phase of monumental sculpture. Wicke (1971: 140) places La Venta Altar 6 earliest in his stylistic sequence of altar figures, whereas Clewlow (1974: Table 18) places it among the latest altars. This altar, along with other monuments of Group III, does seem to represent a stylistic extreme; but its chronological position will have to be established by means other than stylistic appraisal.

Miscellaneous Altars: Group III

A number of figures attached to block surfaces appear to be stylistically linked to Group II sculptures. These include: Potrero Nuevo Monument 2, Laguna de los Cerros Monument 13, San Lorenzo Monument 18, and La Venta Altar 1 and Stela 1 (Figs. 40–43; de la Fuente 1973: No. 143). Some are clearly altars, others are only conceptually related.

La Venta Stela 1 and Potrero Nuevo Monument 2. Although Stela 1 (Fig. 40) is not really an altar form, it bears a strong resemblance to the Potrero Nuevo altar (Fig. 41). Both sculptures depict figures with narrow chests, showing some degree of modeling; both have hands and feet that are incised and squared off at the ends. Costuming is rendered by low relief and incision, without great complexity. The upper ledge on both monuments is incised with a similar bracket motif. A fragment of an altar from Laguna de los Cerros (Monument 15) is also

incised with a similar motif, which is, apparently, a standard ledge design. The figures of Stela 1 and Monument 2 are crowded by the upper ledge, and seem firmly affixed to their stone backgrounds, like the Group Ib and II altars described above.

The Stela 1 figure is not as squat as the Potrero Nuevo figures, but its awkward proportions and exceptionally short legs suggest that it is conceptually related. Both sculptures depict individuals different from the classic male or anthropomorphic-jaguar figures. The Potrero Nuevo figures are usually described as dwarfs, and Stela 1 is often thought to represent a woman. It may be that the squat proportions are a stylistic, as well as an iconographic, choice. It is clear that Olmec artists carved well-proportioned standing figures in the Group I style (Laguna de los Cerros Monument 19; de la Fuente 1973: No. 110). And, although the dwarf figures would call for squat proportions, the woman's(?) proportions reflect a lack of naturalism, which appears to be linked with the general trend towards reduced interest in naturalism observed in Group II.

Two high-relief dwarf figures, much like those on the Potrero Nuevo monument, are depicted on San Lorenzo Monument 18 (de la Fuente 1973: No. 143). The figures have simple costumes, represented by low relief and incision, and squared feet with incised toes. And, like Monument 2, they have puffy chest modeling and short rounded legs—traits that are atypical of Group II. Nevertheless, one Group II seated figure holds a baby or dwarf with exceptionally rounded legs (San Lorenzo Monument 12, Fig. 18); it appears that this trait, as well as the rounded chest, is related to iconography, rather than to the interest in veristic detail characteristic of Group I. Similarly, the rounded chest of La Venta Stela 1 seems related to female iconography. Both Monument 2 and Stela 1 are characterized by the same low altar ledge, and all three monuments have figures that lack the three-dimensionality of Group Ia altars. Specific correlations with the modeling style of Group II figures indicate that all three monuments pertain to that group.

La Venta Altar 1 and Laguna de los Cerros Monument 13. A low-relief jaguar face covers the entire front of Altar 1 (Fig. 42). The facial features are much like those of Group II anthropomorphic jaguars, and the double-rimmed eyes are almost identical to those of San Lorenzo Monument 10 (Fig. 21). The face has serrated or "flame" brows, and a paw-wing design is depicted along both sides of the altar. Although the sculpture is not anthropomorphic, the configuration of the jaguar face and the way it is carved in relatively low relief on the altar surface tentatively relate it to Group II.

Like the La Venta altar, Laguna de los Cerros Monument 13 (Fig. 43) has two side panels depicting the paw-wing motif. The panels flank the torso of a figure depicted in a crouched, prone position with its legs pulled up under the body. The figure is mutilated, but the area of breakage on the chest indicates that it originally had a head, and arms that were extended down in front of the body. A low-relief belt circles the waist directly above the buttocks. The compact pose of the figure and the simple low-relief costuming suggest parallels with Group IIb sculptures. The paw-wing design on Altar 1 and Monument 13 and the trough-shaped eyes with flame brows of Altar 1 are characteristic of San Lorenzo Phase ceramics (Fig. 62; Coe 1970: 26). San Lorenzo Monument 6 (de la Fuente 1973: No. 131), a large naturalistic head, also has the paw-wing design prominently displayed in two panels along the sides of the headdress.

Miscellaneous Sculptured Figures

The sculptures discussed in this section are either too fragmentary or too unusual for secure placement in the established stylistic groups. Nevertheless, in most cases, the figures can be tentatively related to one of the stylistic groups.

Small La Venta Figure. An unusually small basalt sculpture from La Venta (18 centimeters high; Fig. 44) depicts a kneeling figure with its arms held against the chest. The figure wears a round pectoral, but appears to lack sculptural detail, perhaps because of its small size. The compact pose, relatively

angular modeling, and planar hands squared off at the tips suggest tentative correlation with the Group IIb style.

Potrero Nuevo Monument 1. Monument 1 (Fig. 45), probably originally from San Lorenzo, is a fragmentary sculpture depicting the lower portion of an anthropomorphic jaguar holding a snake. One arm is placed between the crossed legs, the other is held rigid along the figure's side. The angle of breakage gives the false impression (in the frontal view) that the figure is rotating its body at the waist. The paw-like hands are sensitively modeled; this feature, along with the rounded modeling of the knees and thighs, suggests placement in Group Ia. Although anthropomorphic jaguars are common in Group II, they are exceptional in Group I. Anthropomorphic jaguars of Group II are usually carved with the same hands and feet as human figures, but in Group I the jaguar hands are modeled with paw-like traits, reflecting the greater interest in veristic detail characteristic of this group. The only other known anthropomorphic jaguar that may be attributed to Group I is San Lorenzo Monument 24 (de la Fuente 1973: No. 149), a cross-legged figure with sensitively modeled paw-like hands.

San Antonio Plaza Monument. The Corona Wrestler from San Antonio Plaza, Veracruz (Figs. 46, 47), has often been referred to as one of the finest works of Olmec sculpture (Bernal 1969: 64; Coe 1965b: 748; Clewlow 1974: 56). Coe describes the sensitive modeling of this figure and the dramatic power of its "contrapposto," or twisted, pose. The rotating posture is unique among known Olmec figures. Although the asymmetric position of the legs is common in Olmec sculpture, the rotation of the upper torso, with the shoulders angled on an axis different from that of the hips, achieves a rare sense of movement. Dynamic postures occur in Olmec art, but this effect is created by leaning poses, sometimes coupled with contorted leg positions. The raised arms are also unusual; although some Olmec figures appear to have had arms that were modeled free of the body, the angle of breakage strongly suggests that their arms were lowered.

Stylistically, the wrestler seems related to Group

I, but with some important differences. The figure exhibits highly sensitive anatomic modeling, like that of Group Ia sculpture, but it lacks any elaboration of three-dimensional costume detail; costuming is minimal and carved in very low relief. Group Ib sculptures have less emphasis on costume detail, but also a reduced interest in anatomic detail. Even when comparing the style of body modeling with Group Ia sculpture—the most naturalistic style—this figure proves to be unique in its sensitive detail, particularly the back which has a bulge of fat at the waist, modeled shoulder blades, and a foot modeled with an arch and rounded toes. Such attention to detail in the rear view is unusual, even in Group I (Figs. 7, 9). Although the rear view is modeled in great detail, the front view lacks the rounded pectoral muscles so characteristic of Group Ia.

The proportions of the figure also seem unusual. Seated Olmec figures (both cross-legged ones and those with one leg folded back) almost invariably have a broad base in proportion to the height of the torso, whereas the wrestler has a rather tall torso in relation to the breadth of the legs. Usually Olmec figures have massive legs, but the wrestler's legs are delicate and rather diminutive. Only one other figure, La Venta Monument 73 (de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 82), has such a tall torso and delicate legs.

The wrestler is bald-headed and bearded, both unusual iconographic features in Olmec monumental sculpture in the round. Bearded figures are represented on Olmec relief carvings; since many figures in the round lack heads, it is not certain that this trait was confined to Olmec relief carving. Many features of the wrestler are rare in Olmec monumental art; parallels seem almost stronger with Olmec stone figurines, which are often bearded, bald-headed, and nude, and are carved rather delicately. One seated figurine of unknown provenience (Fig. 59) is bearded, has a long torso, and is carved in a highly naturalistic style without any costuming detail, much like the wrestler. It seems likely that separate groups of artists carved Olmec figurines and monumental sculptures, and it is possible that the wrestler was carved by an artist schooled in figurine carving.

The wrestler seems to fall outside many of the canons known for Olmec monumental sculpture. Even its petrology is unusual; Williams and Heizer (1965: 23) note that the sculpture is carved of a basalt that does not appear to come from any of the known Olmec stone sources. Much of what has been presented here would almost appear to cast doubt on the authenticity of the wrestler, since it seems to be an atypical example of Olmec monumental art; nevertheless, the piece is one of the earlier-known Olmec sculptures, reportedly discovered in 1933 (Corona 1962), prior to the extensive excavation of Olmec sites. Since it seems highly unlikely that Olmec monumental art would have been falsified as early as 1933, it is probable that the piece represents a little-known aspect of Olmec monumental art.

Summary of the Stylistic Groups

Group I. This sculptural group is characterized by a highly naturalistic style and an emphasis on human subjects. Modeling is rounded and reflects an interest in realistic portrayal of the human form. The group has been tentatively subdivided on the basis of differences in modeling style and pose.

Seated cross-legged figures are the most frequent type of representation in Group Ia; the sample is small, however, and includes some relatively unique postures, such as standing and kneeling figures. Three-dimensional modeling of body forms and costuming is highly developed in this subgroup. Altar figures tend to lean out from the background, and the area behind the shoulders and head is carved out, creating an impression that the figure projects from the background three-dimensionally. Group Ia sculptures are found at three of the four major Olmec sites—San Lorenzo, Laguna de los Cerros, and La Venta. It is worth noting that these highly naturalistic sculptures are known only from these sites, with the possible exception of the wrestler from San Antonio Plaza, Veracruz. But, as noted above, the stylistic affiliation of this monument with Group Ia is problematical.

The sample from Group Ib is small, but examples are known from La Venta, San Lorenzo, and Laguna de los Cerros. Like Group Ia, Group Ib lacks any known examples from the fourth major site, Tres Zapotes. Modeling seems to be somewhat less proficient than Group Ia, and appears to reflect a reduced interest in anatomic and costume detail. Open or extended seated postures are most common in this subgroup. Altar figures tend to project less from the background than Group Ia altars. The niche opening is not carved out behind the shoulders and head, and the figures are sculpted in high relief. In contrast to Group Ia altars, the composition is crowded by a small niche opening and low ledge.

Group II. Sculptures of this group form a sharp contrast with those of Group I. The figures are angular, with little attention to three-dimensional body and costume modeling. Heads and head-dresses, when present, are more skillfully carved than the body, but it is the details of body modeling that separate these sculptures from Group I. Both human and anthropomorphic-jaguar figures are represented in this group, but jaguars by far outnumber humans among figures with heads. Altar figures, rendered in high relief, tend to be firmly affixed to the background. The group has a variety of poses, including kneeling and sitting cross-legged postures, and some figures are seated on bases. A tentative subdivision of the group is suggested, based on differences in pose, a feature which may or may not have chronological significance. Group II sculptures are by far the most numerous among the known Olmec sculptures, and come from a variety of unexcavated sites, as well as the four major Olmec sites (Table II). San Lorenzo and La Venta are well represented in this group, but, at present, there are very few monuments from Tres Zapotes and Laguna de los Cerros that can be ascribed to this group.

Figures of Group IIa all lean forward in a dynamic fashion; occasionally the posture appears almost contorted. Cross-legged figures invariably have their arms extended down in front of the chest,

with the hands resting on the legs. The arms are rendered as two stiff parallel bars, and the legs are usually represented as a solid block, with only a rough indication of the separation between the two limbs. Hands and feet have incised digits, and are usually flattened and squared off at the tips. Figures seated with legs separated in an open pose are less frequent than cross-legged figures. Figures with open poses are common in Group Ib, and provide some link with Group IIa. In fact, Group Ib may be transitional to Group IIa, since both groups have this pose and exhibit a reduced interest in anatomic and costume detail, although this is less extreme in the case of Group Ib.

The carving style of Group IIb is similar to that of Group IIa. There is a feeling that the figure is not free of the original shape of the stone block; the limbs are not carved free of the body, and there is little sense of extension into space among these monuments. The figures have compact, erect postures. Poses include cross-legged, kneeling, and tucked postures. Arms are most often positioned on the chest—minimizing the need to carve out the sculptural material—rather than extended down in front of the chest as in Group IIa.

Group III. Sculptures of this group are extremely angular and crude. In a sense they represent an attenuation of patterns established in Group II, and are certainly more strongly linked to that group than to Group I. Hands and feet are rendered as rough blocks, occasionally rudely incised to depict the digits. Costume detail is virtually absent. Facial features, when present, are rather abstract and geometric. A few Group III sculptures employ classical Olmec themes, but they are carved in a crude manner, which sets them apart from Groups I and II. Group II has few figures mounted on bases, whereas in Group III platform or pedestal bases are quite common. These Group III sculptures are carved with little sense of separation between the figure and base, with the angles joining the figure to the base being softened and rather indistinct in comparison to Group II mounted figures. The only known

Group III altar lacks a niche opening, and has a low, awkwardly placed ledge and a projecting platform mounting the figure. Sculptures of the Group III style are known from La Venta, Tres Zapotes, and possibly Cerro el Vigía in the Tuxtla Mountains (Table II). In general, sculptures of this group seem unusual, and are even thought to be atypical of the Olmec style (for example, Tres Zapotes Monument J, Fig. 29; de la Fuente 1973: No. 237). Nevertheless, there are enough of these crude sculptures at La Venta to suggest the presence of another important facet of the Olmec style, which has remained unrecognized or poorly understood.

Interpretation

Stylistic analysis of anthropomorphic sculptured figures, both in high relief and in the round, allows classification of fifty-nine monuments in one of the three proposed sculptural groups (Table II). Eighteen monuments are placed in Group I, thirty-three in Group II, and eight in Group III, representing more than twenty-five percent of the total of known Olmec monuments (over 200). In addition, sixteen pure relief carvings are classified in one of these three stylistic groups, or to a fourth group comprised solely of relief (described below; Table II). The remaining monuments are colossal heads (fifteen), figures too fragmentary or unusual to assign to a stylistic group (nineteen; Pelliza n.d.: 129–40),⁴ animals, reliefs, or non-representational pieces like columns, drain stones, and amorphous carved fragments.

The number of Olmec sculptures classified in this study is somewhat small, but most anthropomorphic figures have been assigned to one of the stylistic groups. Group II has the largest number of

figures. Groups I and III are based on a rather small sample, but these groups appear to represent important stylistic entities. Naturally, there is no way of knowing if more monuments were carved in the Group II style than the other two styles, or whether the predominance of Group II sculptures is simply a reflection of the accidents of preservation.

The stylistic distinctions of the three major figural sculpture groups is clearly defined, although the subdivision of Groups I and II is considered tentative, since it is based on rather subtle stylistic differences, which may or may not have chronological significance. In the case of Group I, there are some differences in modeling style, and possibly in pose, that suggest the existence of two subgroups. In Group II, the subdivision is based entirely on differences in pose.

Stylistically, the sculptures of Group II appear to be intermediary between two artistic modes—one naturalistic, the other crudely abstract. The subgroups of Groups I and II, if they are valid chronological entities, may refine this stylistic transition. The sculptural style represented by Group I could be termed the Naturalistic Style. Characterizing Group II is more difficult, since its traits are less definite, and can be best defined relative to the other two groups. Nevertheless, since the most important single feature is the angular carving style, Group II can be characterized as the Angular Style, although the nomenclature is a bit awkward. The style of Group III monuments can be termed the Crude Style, even though this has the limitation of being a pejorative term.

It must be emphasized that the distributional patterns of the groups, noted above, are based on the known Olmec monuments, and it is clear that only a fraction of the original corpus of Olmec sculpture is known today. It seems unwise to relate the groups to specific sites, since it appears quite likely that further excavation will greatly alter any suggested distributional patterns. Even with the limited sample, it seems probable that the sculptural traditions of Laguna de los Cerros, San Lorenzo,

⁴ The monuments considered too unusual to place in one of the groups are: Potrero Nuevo Monument 3, Laguna de los Cerros Monument 8, and the Zapotitlán and San Antonio Plaza Monuments. Nine unplaced fragmentary sculptures are mutilated heads, four are body fragments, and two are tenoned heads.

and La Venta underwent similar stylistic shifts and a parallel chronology, at least in the Early Formative period. Some distributional patterns, however, may prove to be significant. In particular, it is note-

worthy that the Group II style seems much more widespread than the other styles, whereas the Group III style appears to have a very limited distribution, centered at La Venta and possibly Tres Zapotes.

The Olmec Archaeological Sequence

THE OLMEC CULTURE, dated *ca.* 1200–400 B.C., is viewed as the earliest civilization in Mesoamerica (Coe 1968b: 41). Events leading to the rise of the civilization are not well understood, and the decline of the culture is equally mysterious. Although the Olmec were clearly centered in the states of Veracruz and Tabasco (Fig. 1), their influence is widespread in Mesoamerica. The nature of this contact with other parts of Mesoamerica is the source of much controversy, and has been attributed variously to military activity, colonization, trade, and status borrowing (Coe 1965b; Bernal 1969; Parsons and Price 1971; Flannery 1968).

Coe divides the Formative or Preclassic Mesoamerican sequence into Early, Middle, and Late Formative periods, dated 1450–900 B.C., 900–400 B.C., and 400–200(?) B.C., respectively (Table I; Coe 1970: 23). But, the beginning of the Olmec epoch is not evident at the site of San Lorenzo until around 1250 B.C., and the end is not clear, since the Late Formative (400–200 B.C.) occupation of San Lorenzo is not distinctively Olmec (Coe 1970: 25, 30). A major Olmec occupation of La Venta began as early as 1200 B.C., and, by 500–400 B.C., the center was abruptly abandoned (Heizer 1971: 52); the latter dates are usually considered to mark the close of the florescent Olmec epoch. Bernal (1969: Table 1) identifies three periods in the Olmec sequence: Olmec, I, II, and III, roughly equivalent to Coe's Early, Middle, and Late Formative divisions, with the difference that the Olmec period is seen to continue at Tres Zapotes until 100 B.C., several hundred years after the final Olmec occupation of La Venta and San Lorenzo. Both the beginning and

end of the Olmec sequence remain rather hazy, and the cut-off point for the Olmec period is particularly difficult since many traces of the Olmec culture linger on after the fall of La Venta and San Lorenzo. Heizer (1971: 65) suggests an "epi-Olmec" period, probably ranging between 500 B.C. and A.D. 100, which was characterized by the survival of certain aspects of the Olmec culture. This period would overlap the Late Preclassic to Protoclassic dates conventionally ascribed to the Izapan culture and style (Coe 1965b: 773). Parsons (1967: 181–3, 196) terms the epigonal Olmec period between 600 and 400 B.C., as "Olmecoid," indicating the stylistic derivation from the Olmec, but denoting a difference in the innovation of certain stylistic features, such as the scroll motif and trophy heads.

Since a study of the chronology of Olmec monumental sculpture must rest on the archaeological chronology established for the region, a synthesis of the archaeological sequences of the major Olmec sites is essential.⁵ Although a complete excavation report is not yet available for San Lorenzo, preliminary publications (Coe 1967a, 1968a, 1968b, 1970) provide a more clearly defined sequence than has been published for other Olmec sites. For this reason, Coe's San Lorenzo sequence forms the framework for the synthesis.

⁵ This synthesis is a summary of a more thorough analysis of Olmec chronology presented by this author (Pelliza n.d.: 11–52).

San Lorenzo

The earliest San Lorenzo phase that has clear Olmec traits is the Chicharras Phase (1250–1150 B.C.; Coe 1970: 25–6). Some continuity exists between this phase and the preceding Bajío Phase (1350–1250 B.C.), a phase which may prove to be a formative Olmec stratum. Evidence of monumental sculpture first appears in the Chicharras Phase, and basalt carving apparently continues to the end of the San Lorenzo Phase, when it abruptly ceases. The majority of the monuments were found sealed in San Lorenzo B deposits (Coe 1970: 26). The fact that the monuments were buried simultaneously at the end of the San Lorenzo Phase does not prove that they were all carved during this phase (1150–900 B.C.), but demonstrates that they were definitely carved no later than the end of the San Lorenzo Phase.

The Chicharras Phase is characterized by Olmec ceramics such as Kaolin (or Xochiltepec) White and Tatagapa Red, as well as solid and hollow Olmec figurines. There is a great deal of continuity between this phase and the following San Lorenzo Phase, but the appearance of two new wares, Limon Carved-Incised and Calzadas Carved, clearly distinguishes the San Lorenzo Phase. Calzadas Carved is decorated with excised motifs, such as the paw-wing design, fire-serpent jaws, crossed bands, and flame brows, all considered characteristic Olmec design elements (Fig. 62a–c; Coe 1970: 26).

The subsequent Nacaste Phase (900–800 B.C.) represents a break with Early Formative Olmec traditions, apparently linked to the arrival of a new population (most probably from southern Mesoamerica) who introduced a ceramic tradition resembling that of Chiapas and coastal Guatemala (Coe 1970: 28). Some contact with the La Venta Olmec is indicated by the presence of certain small portable art objects like those found at La Venta in Middle Formative contexts. San Lorenzo was apparently abandoned for a brief period after the Nacaste Phase, and was subsequently reoccupied in the Palangana Phase (ca. 600–400 B.C.), probably

by a group from either La Venta or Tres Zapotes (Coe 1970: 29–30). Although the Palangana Phase represents the last clear Olmec occupation of San Lorenzo, a small population continued to inhabit the nearby site of San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán in the Late Formative (Remplás Phase; Coe 1970: 30–1). The Remplás Phase postdates La Venta, and probably should be viewed as an epigonal Olmec component reflecting changes leading to the Izapan or Protoclassic period.

Coe's analysis of the ceramic affiliations of San Lorenzo indicates that the strongest relationships with La Venta are found in the late Middle Formative Palangana Phase. Nevertheless, some of the La Venta ceramics (discussed below) suggest that close contact existed between the two areas in Early Formative times as well. The early Middle Formative period appears to reflect a disruption of the Olmec culture, heralded by the destruction of monuments around 900 B.C. San Lorenzo and La Venta were apparently not in close contact between 900 and 800 B.C., and San Lorenzo was subsequently abandoned until around 600 B.C., when once again the two sites renewed their strong ties.

La Venta

The La Venta chronology is based on a four-phase sequence (Table I) defined by changes in the architectural features of Complex A, the principal ceremonial complex of the island site. Radiocarbon dates for Complex A range between 1200–1000 B.C. and 500–400 B.C. (Heizer 1971: 52). Since ceramics from Complex A are very scarce, it is difficult to correlate the architectural phases with the ceramics from refuse deposits. The La Venta ceramic complex may be as old as 1500 B.C. (Piña Chan and Covarrubias 1964: 18–21; MacNeish *et al.* 1970: Fig. 156), but this early ceramic component has not been described in detail. Ceramics with symbolic motifs comparable to those of the Early Formative San Lorenzo Phase, such as the paw-wing and fire-serpent designs, do not appear to be present in Piña Chan's material (Pelliza n.d.:

28–33); but perhaps some of Squier's Test C ceramics (levels 215–85; MacNeish *et al.* 1970: 40, 279–80), when more thoroughly described, will prove to be parallel.⁶ Similarities to other Early Formative wares of the San Lorenzo Phase (and probably the Chicharras Phase), such as red paste and red-slipped wares, seem more clear (Hallinan *et al.* 1968: 161, 164–6; Heizer 1968: 36). It would seem that relationships with San Lorenzo were weak during the early Middle Formative; however, a strong relationship in the late Middle Formative is suggested by the similarity of Drucker's (1952) La Venta ceramics to those of the Palangana Phase of San Lorenzo (Coe 1970). Although the San Lorenzo sequence continues through the Late Formative, La Venta was abandoned at the close of the Middle Formative, and, except for a brief post-Phase IV reoccupation, the site was not occupied again until the Late Classic period (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 237–48; Coe 1965a: 710).

Even though direct archaeological evidence is lacking, most investigators agree that the La Venta Olmec began carving monuments in the Early Formative, contemporary with San Lorenzo. Most of the monuments were apparently re-erected with each successive building phase, and were found positioned on top of construction surfaces of the last phase, Phase IV; however, a few monuments were discovered sealed in Phase IV deposits (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 206, 229–30; Heizer 1971: 52). Although La Venta monuments were mutilated like those of San Lorenzo, there is no available evidence to suggest a massive burial of monuments at the close of the Early Formative.

Jade and serpentine carvings are common in Phases II–IV, dated to the Middle Formative. There is only a single Phase I offering with jade, and its attribution to Phase I is considered tentative (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 171). Greenstone and serpen-

tine carvings are present at San Lorenzo in the Nacaste Phase, *ca.* 900–800 B.C., and, with only rare exceptions, these carvings are confined to the Middle Formative levels at San Lorenzo (Coe 1970: 25, 28). At present, the archaeological evidence suggests that the apogee of this art form was reached in the Middle Formative among the Olmec.

Tres Zapotes

Some archaeologists claim that the Lower Tres Zapotes levels date to the Early Formative (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 261; Coe (1965a: 694), however, dates the beginning of the Tres Zapotes sequence to the Late Formative. Even if an Early Formative date for the Lower Tres Zapotes material were acceptable, Drucker's (1943) description of the ceramics does not suggest any comparison with the Early Formative San Lorenzo material. Nevertheless, figurines from non-stratigraphic trenches at Tres Zapotes (Weiant 1943: Pls. 19, 7–9, 35, 7–11) resemble "ball-player" and "baby-faced" figurines from Early Formative levels at San Lorenzo (Pelliza n.d.: 44–5), and it is possible that an Early Formative ceramic complex like that of San Lorenzo will be eventually discovered at Tres Zapotes.

The Tres Zapotes ceramic complex, as it is presently known, is closely affiliated with Middle to Late Formative ceramics from Central Veracruz (MacNeish *et al.* 1970: 280, Fig. 153). Relationships with La Venta and San Lorenzo ceramics are evident in the late Middle Formative period, and probably continue into the Late Formative at San Lorenzo (Coe 1970: 23, 29, 31). Although the occupation of Tres Zapotes is continuous through Late Classic times, the ceramic evidence indicates a growing independence from earlier Olmec patterns in Late Formative to Protoclassic times (Coe 1965a: 694; Squier n.d.: 254).

Laguna de los Cerros

Preliminary excavations of Formative levels at Laguna de los Cerros (Trench 14) indicate the presence of a San Lorenzo Phase component (Grieder n.d.).

⁶ MacNeish, Peterson, and Flannery (1970: 55) compare a Test C hollow figurine to Early Formative Ajalpan Phase types, and another comparable example pertains to the lowest levels of Drucker's (1952: Pls. 39f, j, 41e) stratigraphic trenches, as do fragments of Early Formative, hollow, "Las Bocas"-style figurines.

The next identifiable ceramic component appears to be Late Classic or early Postclassic in date (Griender n.d.; Coe in Proskouriakoff 1968: 133–4). The lowest levels of Trench 14 contain what Griender (n.d.: 9) describes as a pre-San Lorenzo Phase component, which appears to correlate with the Chicharras Phase of San Lorenzo (Pelliza n.d.: 47–8). Some basalt fragments in this early stratum and a monument with tentative San Lorenzo Phase ceramic associations (Monument 19; Griender n.d. 9–10) suggest that carving probably began prior to the San Lorenzo Phase, and continued through the San Lorenzo Phase. It is possible that monumental carving ceased abruptly with the mutilation and

burial of monuments at the end of the Early Formative, as at San Lorenzo. Unlike San Lorenzo, however, many of the Laguna de los Cerros monuments were later re-erected and were discovered associated with Late Classic deposits (Medellín Zenil 1960), or early Postclassic, according to Michael Coe, personal communication). Another unusual aspect of the archaeological sequence of Laguna de los Cerros is the apparent lack of a Middle Formative stratum. Perhaps with more complete excavation of the Formative levels of the site, a Middle Formative component will be discovered, but at present the evidence suggests that the site was abandoned at the end of the Early Formative.

Chronology of the Stylistic Groups

IT IS APPARENT that the archaeological context of the sculptures does not provide sufficient evidence to seriate the stylistic groups. Nevertheless, when combined with information drawn from other aspects of the archaeological record, a definite pattern emerges. These secondary lines of evidence include the stylistic relationship of sculptural motifs to archaeologically dated Olmec ceramic designs, and correlations with related sculptures from archaeological sites outside the Olmec area.

Evidence for Dating Group II Monuments

Twenty monuments are securely attributed to Group II, and thirteen additional sculptures are tentatively placed in this group; these come from a total of fifty-nine anthropomorphic figures that have diagnostic traits leading to their classification in one of the three groups (Table II). Since Group II monuments are most numerous, and since this group appears to represent a stylistic transition between Groups I and III, its chronological placement is most significant.

Archaeological Context. Coe's excavations (1968b:

52; 1970: 28) strongly suggest that all San Lorenzo monuments should date prior to 900 B.C., on the basis of the San Lorenzo B Phase context of numerous monuments. In addition, Coe (personal communication) believes that sculptures from Potrero Nuevo and San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán were moved from the nearby site of San Lorenzo, indicating that an Early Formative date for these sculptures is probable. The burial of monuments at San Lorenzo seems to have had a ceremonial significance, for many were placed in what appear to be ritual alignments (Coe 1968b: 54–5). Their association with the San Lorenzo B Phase, however, does not necessarily indicate that they were all carved in this phase, only that they must have been carved sometime prior to the end of the phase.

Heizer (1971: 52) notes that the La Venta monuments cannot be precisely dated by either their stratigraphic context or radiocarbon. Coe (1968b: 62) believes that most La Venta monuments date to the Early Formative, since he sees them as stylistically similar to the San Lorenzo sculptures. Recently, Clewlow (1974: Tables 11–20) has suggested that most La Venta monuments date to the Middle

Formative La Venta Phases II–IV, on the basis of his belief that they are not stylistically related to the San Lorenzo sculptures. Nevertheless, the stylistic evidence presented above indicates that most La Venta anthropomorphic figures correlate stylistically with those of San Lorenzo, except for the Crude Style sculptures placed in Group III. Therefore, it seems likely that the majority date to the Early Formative, contemporary with those of San Lorenzo. On the other hand, low-relief carvings from La Venta do differ stylistically from those of San Lorenzo (discussed below), and probably postdate the Early Formative. A few of these low-relief carvings have been found sealed in Phase IV deposits (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 229–30), providing further evidence to support a Middle Formative date.

Although many of the Laguna de los Cerros monuments were found in proximity to or associated with Late Classic deposits (Monuments 3, 5, 19, 26, 27; Medellín Zenil 1960: 86–97), Laguna de los Cerros Monument 1 (de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 98) was found in Preclassic levels. Furthermore, Grieder (n.d.: 9) analyzed sherds from the level in which Monument 19 was discovered, and believes they are closely related to San Lorenzo Phase ceramics. A number of Laguna de los Cerros sculptures were re-erected by a later culture, but it is probable that the majority remain buried in Preclassic deposits. Grieder did not find a Middle Formative component in Trench 14, and it may be that the site was unoccupied during that period, in which case all the Olmec sculptures would clearly date to the Early Formative.

A few Olmec monuments have unique archaeological associations that allow for a more precise estimate of their date. These include three La Venta relief carvings (Monuments 6, 22, and 25; Drucker *et al.* 1959: 229) and two anthropomorphic figures sculpted in the round. San Lorenzo Monument 52 of Group IIb (Fig. 22) was almost certainly carved at the time it was buried. Coe notes that Monument 52 was part of a drain system laid down somewhat prior to the massive burial of monuments at the end of the San Lorenzo Phase (Coe, personal commu-

nication). Since Monument 52 was carved specifically for burial in the drain system, it should date around 950–900 B.C., towards the end of the San Lorenzo B Phase. Another sculpture related to the Group IIb style, a small basalt figure from La Venta (Fig. 46), is also found in a unique archaeological context. It was discovered in early Phase II deposits, and the excavators note that the break at the neck is not sharp, and the figure is quite eroded (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 107–8, 211–2, Fig. 27). It seems likely, on the basis of the condition of the figure, that the sculpture was broken prior to its burial, and carved perhaps in Phase I. In any case, a date of around 900 B.C. is suggested for this figure, correlating with the dates proposed for the beginning of Phase II (Bernal 1971: 47; Heizer 1971: 51–2).

Ceramic Motifs on Group II Sculptures. The paw-wing motif is an important design on Calzadas Carved, a San Lorenzo Phase ceramic type, and on late Early Formative Olmec ceramics from Tlatilco (Fig. 62a; Paul Tolstoy, personal communication; Coe 1970: 26). The period of popularity of this motif can be estimated on the basis of the range of dates for the relevant ceramic types, and it is expected that this time span should overlap with the period of its use on monumental sculpture.⁷ Although Joralemon (1971: No. 36) includes a number of varieties of the paw-wing design, it is the rectilinear type with a squared scroll in the palm that is found on both monumental sculptures and late Early Formative ceramics (1150–900 B.C.). Two Group II monuments depict this design, as well as one unclassified head from San Lorenzo, Monument 6 (de la Fuente 1973: No. 131). Laguna de los Cerros Monument 13 (Fig. 45), which appears related to Group IIb, represents a crouching anthropomorphic figure with paw-wings on panels flanking its sides. La Venta Altar 1 (Fig. 42), another monument

⁷ Rowe (1962) developed this approach to sculptural chronology by dating Chavín monumental sculpture on the basis of relationships to ceramic motifs from Chavinoid ceramics of the Ica Valley.

tentatively assigned to Group IIb, also displays the paw-wing design in two panels along the sides of the figure.

A unique sherd of Yagua Orange, dating to the San Lorenzo B Phase (Fig. 62d; Coe, personal communication), depicts a frontal jaguar face with a rimmed mouth, wide nose, and double-rimmed, trough-shaped eyes, with twin lobes between the eyes, almost identical to the face on La Venta Altar 1 and similar to other Group II faces like that on San Lorenzo Monument 10 (Fig. 21). Altar 1 also has serrate or “flame” brows above the trough-shaped eyes—a combination that is fairly common on late Early Formative Olmec ceramics (Figs. 62b, c, 65). Several Olmec stone masks and *hachas* depict similar faces (Joralemon 1971: Figs. 152, 162), but none are dated by archaeological context. An *hacha* from a La Venta Phase IV offering (Joralemon 1971: Fig. 164; Drucker *et al.* 1959: 273) represents a flame-browed jaguar, but lacks the double-rimmed eyes characteristic of the late Early Formative ceramic designs. This piece could have been carved prior to Phase IV since offerings occasionally included heirlooms or reworked pieces (Cervantes 1969: Fig. 11), but was probably no earlier than Phase II, based on the time span suggested for jade and related carvings discussed above.

Excised, rectilinear, bracket designs with tapering ends, probably stylized dentate patterns, are a common feature on Calzadas Carved ceramics of San Lorenzo, and other late Early Formative Olmec ceramics from outside the heartland (Fig. 62a; Flannery 1968: Fig. 3; Weaver 1967: Pl. 17). Brackets are a prominent ledge ornament on two Group II monuments, Potrero Nuevo Monument 2 and La Venta Stela 1 (Figs. 40, 41). The Potrero Nuevo brackets are particularly like the ceramic designs, for the ends are tapered and the edges are angled in a way that makes the design seem almost carved out or excised. Laguna de los Cerros Monument 15, an altar fragment, also has incised bracket designs on the ledge.

A crossed-band design (St. Andrew’s Cross) appears on San Lorenzo Phase ceramics, and on a

number of Group II monuments (Figs. 12, 22, 24), most often on a rectangular chest ornament. But, this motif seems to have a long time span, and even appears on a chest ornament in Izapan art (Quirarte 1973: Pl. III). The apparent simplicity of the design does not lend itself to stylistic correlations of a very specific nature, which further reduces its value as a possible chronological marker.

Relatively complex ceramic designs that can be demonstrated to have a limited time span are considered useful in chronological correlations with designs on monumental sculpture. It is important to note that designs employed here as chronological markers are characteristic of late Early Formative ceramics, but not of jade and related portable stone carvings, most of which probably date to the Middle Formative. The date suggested for Group II sculptures bearing these designs is around 1150–900 B.C., based on the time span for comparable motifs on San Lorenzo Phase ceramics.

Sculptures from outside the Heartland. A seated Olmec figure from Chalcatzingo (Fig. 48) seems related to Group II sculptures. Although this Central Highlands figure may reflect some regional stylistic variations, its compact pose, massive and rather angular arms, and solid, block-like, crossed legs resemble Group IIb sculptures. Costume details, such as the grooved loincloth, rectangular low-relief pectoral with crossed bands, and low-relief belt, are similar to Group II costuming (Figs. 16, 18, 22, 24).

Grove’s (1974: 115) recent excavations at Chalcatzingo lead him to place the major occupation of the site in the early Middle Formative, around 900–800 B.C. He believes that the Olmec-related reliefs date to this period, and presumably he would also date the sculpted figure to this epoch. Grove emphasizes that there is nothing “Olmec” about the Chalcatzingo ceramics of this period. It should be noted, however, that some of the ceramics excavated by Piña Chan (1955: Pls. 3g, 8o, p, q) at Chalcatzingo relate directly to gray-black Olmec excised wares, like Calzadas Carved of San Lorenzo. It is unquestionable that there was some Early For-

mative occupation linking Chalcatzingo to the Olmec; whether the sculpted figure dates to this epoch or to the subsequent period is problematical. Since the figure is carved in the round, it may not be contemporary with the reliefs, and may, in fact, be earlier. The Olmec ceramics from the site probably date no earlier than around 1150–900 B.C.; the sculpture may be that early, but it is certainly no later than around 800 B.C., based on Grove's work at the site.

A remarkable sculpture from Ojo de Agua, Chiapas (Fig. 49), incorporates many Olmec stylistic features, but clearly was not transported from the Olmec area, since it was carved in stone native to the Chiapas area (Carlos Navarrete, personal communication). The main figure is an anthropomorphic being wearing a mutilated, grotesque mask (possibly with geometric curved fangs), and a curved, cleft headdress. The torso of the figure is carved with a stone box depicting Olmec motifs, including a flame-browed jaguar face, a seated cleft-headed anthropomorphic jaguar, and flanking paw-wing designs. Navarrete (1974: 20) relates it to the San Martín Pajapan figure (Fig. 22; Group IIa) which has a similar curved, cleft headdress. But, as Navarrete (1974: 18–19) points out, the main figure seems almost subordinate to the motifs carved on its surface. The form of the figure with its rectangular block torso and heavy base strongly resembles a Group III sculpture, La Venta Monument 74 (Fig. 28). Nevertheless, the carving style of the Chiapas figure seems more refined and complex when compared to Group III sculptures. In this respect, it recalls the case of mounted figures in Groups II and III, particularly Tenochtitlán Monument 1 and La Venta Monument 74 (Figs. 23, 25; Groups II and III, respectively), which represent almost identical themes, but reflect significant stylistic differences. The arms and legs of the Chiapas figure are fairly angular; the feet have incised toes, which are squared off at the tips like those of Group II sculptures, and the chest is carved with motifs reminiscent of Group II monuments. But, in contrast to heartland Olmec sculptures, the motifs are numerous, and the jaguar

face is very abstract. It is probable that these variations are a result of regional interpretations of the Olmec style.

The low-relief motifs employed on the Chiapas sculpture seem directly related to heartland Olmec types, especially those of Group IIb monuments. The stone box may depict a schematic view of an altar much like La Venta Altar 1 (Fig. 42), a flame-browed jaguar with rimmed trough-shaped eyes and flanking paw-wing designs. The enthroned jaguar figure also suggests altar iconography, and strongly resembles San Lorenzo Monument 52 (Fig. 22) in details like the almond-shaped eyes, ribbed ear panels, and chest plaque with crossed bands. Also, the figure is posed with its arms drawn up to the chest like many Group IIb monuments. The combination of all these design features with a sculptural style reminiscent of Group II provides further proof of the contemporaneity of various traits attributed to Group II.

Unfortunately, the archaeological context of the sculpture is unknown. Olmec-related ceramics of both the Early and Middle Formative are found in Pacific Coastal Chiapas, near the area where the sculpture was discovered. But, it appears that an Early Formative date is more likely, since the sculptural motifs parallel those of San Lorenzo Phase ceramics.

Summary. The archaeological context of Group II sculptures from San Lorenzo (and probably Laguna de los Cerros) strongly suggests that the group as a whole should date prior to 900 B.C. The time span of certain Group II sculptural motifs is estimated to be between 1150 and 900 B.C., based on parallels with San Lorenzo Phase ceramic designs. Relationships exist with designs on jade and other portable stone carvings of a probable Middle Formative date; but the parallels are stronger with late Early Formative ceramics, which are considered more reliable chronological markers. Stylistic relationships between Group IIb and the Chalcatzingo sculpture suggest a time span *ca.* 1150–800 B.C., although a date prior to 900 B.C. is favored, since all other evidence suggests that Group II dates to the

Early Formative. It is significant that a Group IIb sculpture from San Lorenzo and another from La Venta were discovered in unique archaeological contexts that suggest they date between 950 and 900 B.C. If Group IIb is indeed chronologically distinct from Group IIa, this evidence indicates that it probably was the later style, dating to the end of the Early Formative.

Evidence for Dating Group III Monuments

Only eight monuments are assigned to Group III (Table II). Although the sample is small, it is considered to represent an important stylistic entity.

Archaeological Context. Group III includes sculptures from La Venta and Tres Zapotes, and probably Cerro el Vigía. Neither the La Venta nor the Tres Zapotes examples can be dated by their archaeological context. But, it may be significant in terms of dating Group III that no examples are known from San Lorenzo, where all the monuments are believed to date to the Early Formative, or from Laguna de los Cerros, which may have been unoccupied in the Middle Formative. On the other hand, both La Venta and Tres Zapotes have later Olmec occupations and a strong relief carving tradition that clearly postdates the Early Formative.

Reliefs found in Phase IV contexts at La Venta (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 229) indicate that stone carving continued into the late Middle Formative. Although the La Venta Olmec re-erected most of their monuments, Monument 6 was buried in Phase IV deposits (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 49, 272; Joralemon 1971: Fig. 145). This sandstone coffer, depicting a jaguar in relief, was almost certainly carved during Phase IV, since it was a receptacle for a burial or offering. Sandstone is a material believed to have been used only in Phase IV (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 126). Although sandstone is extremely rare in Olmec monumental art, it is significant that the only known anthropomorphic sculpture in the round carved of this material, La Venta Monument A (Stirling 1968), is tentatively assigned to Group III. The archaeological context of Monument 6, and the fact that

both this monument and Monument A are carved of sandstone, indicates they are probably roughly contemporary late Olmec sculptures.

Izapan-style monuments at Tres Zapotes (de la Fuente 1973: Láms. 224, 225; Coe 1965b: 773) belong to a sculptural tradition believed to date to the Late Formative. Some Tres Zapotes sculptures were apparently carved in the Early Formative, since they correlate stylistically with San Lorenzo Monuments of Group II (Monuments I and M; Stirling 1943: Pls. 9, 11). Tres Zapotes Monument J of Group III is stylistically distinct, and may represent a later style bridging the gap between the Early Formative Olmec and Izapan-style monuments at the site.

One possible Group III sculpture is known from Cerro el Vigía in the Tuxtla area (Monument 3; de la Fuente 1973: No. 89). Preliminary excavations in that region have revealed a late Olmec occupation with a ceramic component related to Tres Zapotes ceramics, and dating no earlier than the Middle Formative (Francisco Beverido, personal communication, 1971). Although this information is tentative, it does suggest that monuments from this site date around the Middle Formative, or possibly later. Another monument from Cerro el Vigía is a colossal head similar to those from Tres Zapotes and Nestepe (de la Fuente 1973: Láms. 88, 198), and it may be that all three heads date to the Middle Formative. All wear similar helmets and earplugs, and have a planar brow bridging the nose. In addition, the Cerro el Vigía head has closed or dead eyes like the Monte Alto heads, which are believed to date to the Middle or Late Formative (Easby and Scott 1970: Fig. 57).

Sculptures from outside the Heartland. Sculptures from Tiltepec and Tzutzuculi (Figs. 50–56) are carved in a similar style, and seem related to certain La Venta monuments. The two Chiapas sites are located less than thirty kilometers apart, near Tonalá on the Pacific Slope. In an archaeological survey of the site of Tzutzuculi, Navarrete (1959: 6) identified the ceramics as Chiapa II in date, but subsequently Lowe (1969: 356) stated that the site produced “an

impressive uniformity of late Middle Preclassic (Chiapa III) sherds throughout." Navarrete's recent excavations at Tiltepec lead him to date the sculptures to the Chiapa III Phase (personal communication).

Both sites have monuments that are low-relief depictions of a central face with an oval mouth, closed eyes, and a cartouche with perforated ear appendages surrounding the face (Figs. 50, 52). The Tiltepec example has crossed arms below the head, and a small cartouche with radiating circles enclosing a small face above the main figure. Similarly, on the Tzutzuculi example, circular cartouche designs radiate from the top of the central face.

The corpus of known sculptures is much larger at Tiltepec, and a number of sculptures depict full figures or half figures. One monument (Fig. 53) has a face with a triangular nose, wide mouth, and blank or closed eyes. The face is enclosed in a cartouche and crowned by another cartouche decorated with three small dots, like the Tzutzuculi sculpture described above (Fig. 52). The upper torso of the figure is represented with block-like arms, held up to the chest, and massive rectangular shoulder pads. Another Tiltepec example (Fig. 54) has similar facial features and angular arms, but lacks the cartouche around the face, and is represented in full figure within a niche.

Another full figure from Tiltepec (Fig. 51) shares certain elements with the niche figure, such as the arms held level at the chest, circular earplugs, and a tall headdress; but the headdress is much more elaborate, and the figure is less massive and does not have the turned-in feet. In fact, it seems related to certain Olmec reliefs such as La Venta Stela 2 (Fig. 68). Both represent frontal figures carved in fairly high relief, with arms at chest level, and both wear tall, elaborate headdresses and circular earplugs. The loincloth and belt on the Tiltepec figure resemble the typical Olmec costume (though in the case of Stela 2 the figure wears a short tunic). But, the rather simplified composition and carving, and the posture of the Tiltepec figure, relate it to the local sculptural style. Other strong parallels between

the Chiapas sculptures and La Venta reliefs are noted when examining La Venta Monument 71 (Fig. 73). Like the Chiapas sculptures, Monument 71 depicts numerous faces with closed eyes and oval mouths, framed by cartouches with radiating elements, although in this case the designs are stepped motifs rather than circles. A small crouching jaguar from Tiltepec (Fig. 55) resembles certain Olmec depictions, such as La Venta Monument 60 (de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 71). Furthermore, a direct Olmec influence at Tzutzuculi is evident in the jaguar face incised on a slab or stela (Fig. 56).

Stylistic parallels between Tiltepec and La Venta Group III monuments are striking. The La Venta Altar 6 figure (Fig. 39) has a face with a triangular nose and blank eyes, block-like limbs, and rectangular shoulder pads that are particularly like one of the Tiltepec sculptures (Fig. 53). La Venta Monument A (Stirling 1968), tentatively assigned to Group III, has block-like arms raised to chest level, as is the case with many of the Chiapas sculptures. A jade figurine from La Venta (Drucker *et al.* 1959: Fig. 72) seems related to the Chiapas sculptures; the triangular nose, blank eyes, wide oval mouth, cartouche-like chin strap, and the hands held level at the chest all recall the Tiltepec sculptures. The La Venta excavators believe the figurine represents a later style (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 233), but it may also reflect foreign influences. La Venta Monument 71 is also atypical of the Olmec style, and appears to be directly related to the Chiapas monuments. La Venta Altar 6 may also reflect foreign stylistic elements. La Venta-style elements are evident in some of the Pacific Slope sculptures; this suggests an interchange of ideas between the two areas, almost certainly occurring in the Middle Formative.

Izapa Monument 2 (Fig. 57) exhibits certain parallels with Olmec monuments, but has even stronger relationships to the Tiltepec sculptures. The main figure is seated in a niche, like most Olmec altar figures, but the niche is larger and encloses the whole figure, as does the Tiltepec niche figure (Fig. 54). A face with closed eyes, placed above the niche, is also reminiscent of the Chiapas

sculptures. Unfortunately, the Izapa figure is quite mutilated, and comparisons in terms of body modeling are impossible. Although most of the Izapa monuments have been dated to the Late Preclassic or Protoclassic on stylistic grounds (Easby and Scott 1970: 94–5), the Izapa excavators believe that Monument 2 was probably erected in the Middle Preclassic (Ekholm 1969: 99–100), or contemporary with the Chiapas sculptures and the latter part of the La Venta Olmec occupation.

Guatemalan bench figures present a somewhat unified style, characterized by massive figures carved in an angular fashion with blocky hands and feet, suggesting parallels with the Group III sculptures. Two Group III figures (Figs. 26, 27) are mounted on platform pedestals, or benches, in much the same way that the Guatemalan figures are mounted. A San José Pinula bench figure (Fig. 58) forms a striking parallel with La Venta Monument 40; both are carved with block feet and crudely incised hands, and are seated in a similar fashion on a pedestal or platform bench with a solid shaft. In addition, the Guatemalan sculpture has angular shoulder pads and facial features like those of the La Venta Altar 6 figure (Fig. 39), also of Group III. Although many parallels exist between the San José Pinula figure and Group III sculptures, the Guatemalan sculpture has some purely local stylistic traits, such as tight scroll-shaped ears and a round, layered headdress. Stone (1972: 69) dates this sculpture to the early Providencia Phase (*ca.* 500 B.C.), though she does not specify that it is dated by archaeological context. Navarrete (1972) describes a bench figure from Chiapas found in late Protoclassic contexts (Fig. 60). This figure resembles the Guatemalan bench figure, but is seated on a double-shafted bench. Stone (1972: 66–8) thinks that either the Chiapas bench figure was an heirloom when buried, or that bench figures had a relatively long period of popularity. In any case, the correlations suggest that La Venta bench figures are Middle Formative in date.

A mushroom stone from San José Pinula (Fig. 61) resembles La Venta Altar 6; both depict figures

with angular limbs, blank eyes, and heavy shoulder pads, seated on a bench or platform that is almost trapezoidal in shape. Easby and Scott (1970: 16–17, Fig. 63) date this example to the Providencia Phase, which they place in the Late Formative, *ca.* 300–100 B.C. Nevertheless, most archaeologists date this phase to the late Middle Formative (Borhegyi 1965; Parsons 1969; Stone 1972), overlapping with the latter part of the La Venta occupation.

Summary. There is some archaeological evidence from the Olmec area that suggests that Group III is a late Olmec style. One monument tentatively related to Group III is carved of sandstone, a material believed to be characteristic of La Venta Phase IV. Another possible Group III monument is from Cerro el Vigía, a site that appears to have been occupied no earlier than the Middle Formative.

Stronger evidence for a Middle Formative dating of Group III comes from stylistic parallels with Guatemalan and Chiapas sculptures. Sculptures from Tiltepec on the Pacific Slope of Chiapas, estimated to be of a date contemporary with the Chiapa III Phase (700–550 B.C.), share many features with Group III sculptures, including a blocky carving style, angular shoulder pads, blank eyes, and triangular noses. Guatemalan bench figures share many of these features with the Chiapas sculptures and the Group III style. In addition, these sculptures have bench supports suggesting direct parallels with some of the La Venta Group III monuments. The bench figures appear to have a fairly long time span in Guatemala, from the late Middle Formative to the Protoclassic, and the San José Pinula figure attributed to the Providencia Phase seems most strongly related to the La Venta sculptures. Stylistic correlations with Guatemalan mushroom stones also suggest a late date for Group III sculptures.

Monuments of the Group III style are rather atypical and preserve only some classic Olmec elements. The new or foreign elements in this stylistic group appear to have a southern source, since these traits are much more developed in Guatemalan and Chiapas sculptures from the Highlands and Pacific

Slope. Sites in the Pacific Slope area of Chiapas, near Tonalá, seem to have had direct contact with the Olmec style and borrowed certain elements from the La Venta relief style. It appears that an interchange of ideas took place between the two areas in the late Middle Formative. It seems likely that sculpture in the round was on the decline in the Olmec heartland at this time, and artists had begun to borrow elements from other styles and to superimpose them on more ancient Olmec themes. On the other hand, Olmec relief carving was probably in its florescent stage, since it appears to have influenced Middle Formative Chiapas relief carving.

Evidence for Dating Group I Monuments

Eighteen sculptures are attributed to the Group I style (Table II). Though the group is small, it includes some of the most outstanding examples of Olmec monumental art.

Archaeological Context. At San Lorenzo, sculptures pertaining to Group I, such as Monuments 20, 34, and 47, were found mutilated and buried in San Lorenzo B deposits (Coe 1968b). Virtually all San Lorenzo sculptures excavated under controlled conditions were found in this same level, indicating that they date prior to 900 B.C. Group I has a relatively high percentage of San Lorenzo monuments, and it appears certain that the group as a whole dates to the Early Formative. Other Group I sculptures are from Laguna de los Cerros and La Venta. Both of these sites have a clear Early Formative occupation, probably as old as the Chicharras Phase of San Lorenzo. In addition, there is some evidence from Laguna de los Cerros to indicate that monuments from this site were originally buried in San Lorenzo Phase deposits, as at San Lorenzo.

Sculptural carving probably began as early as the Chicharras Phase at San Lorenzo (ca. 1250–1150 B.C.); a fragment of a carved rope ornament clearly associated with these deposits was discovered there, and Coe (1970: 26) notes that the fragment appears to belong to the headdress of a colossal head. Similarly, Grieder (n.d.: 10) records the presence of

basalt chips from what he believes to be a colossal head in pre-San Lorenzo Phase deposits at Laguna de los Cerros. These early fragments do not appear to represent some crude or archaic Olmec style, but, rather, a highly developed monumental style like that of the colossal heads. Although no direct correlation can be suggested between the colossal heads and the Group I style—since facial carving and headdress ornamentation are well developed in both the Group I and II styles—it is significant that by 1250 B.C. Olmec sculptors were probably carving sophisticated monumental sculptures.

Coe (1968b: 64) suggests that San Lorenzo Monument 42 and related crude reliefs like Monuments 21 and 41 (de la Fuente 1973: Nos. 146, 166, 167) may represent the earliest sculptural style at San Lorenzo. This opinion is apparently based on the crude sculptural style, and the fact that Monument 42 was discovered in San Lorenzo A deposits, below the massive burial of the monuments in the San Lorenzo B Phase (Coe 1967a: 4). Nevertheless, the Chicharras Phase fragments are the earliest evidence of sculpture at San Lorenzo, and would appear to reflect a more developed sculptural style. Even without this archaeological evidence, on stylistic grounds it seems unlikely that the crude reliefs are formative to the sophisticated anthropomorphic sculptures characteristic of Groups I and II, since they lack any real concept of anatomic human form. These reliefs may have been carved by different artists, or for a purpose different from that of the corpus of Olmec sculptures. Proskouriakoff (1971: 147–8) suggests that they may have had a pictographic function, reflecting a primitive form of picture-writing prior to the development of inscriptions.

Ceramic Motifs. La Venta Altar 4 (Fig. 30) depicts brackets on the altar ledge. Brackets are an important motif on San Lorenzo Phase ceramics (Fig. 62a), and they also appear on two Group II monuments (Figs. 40, 41). The ceramic motif is excised with tapering ends, and the Group II examples are incised, and, in one case, rendered with tapering ends. In contrast, the Altar 4 example is depicted in

low relief without tapering ends, stylistic differences that may reflect a chronological separation between the Group I and II versions.

A grotesque jaguar mask is also represented on the Altar 4 ledge. The configuration of the mask is quite different from the types on San Lorenzo Phase ceramics and Group II monuments (Figs. 16, 21, 22, 42, 62d). Instead of the usual L-shaped, almond- or trough-shaped eyes, the Altar 4 example has elongated oval eyes. The form of the mouth is also distinctive. The fangs are diminutive and less grotesque than those on Group II jaguars. Whereas Group II jaguars have heavy, angular lips, this jaguar has curvilinear lips and a jaw outlined by a narrow relief band of an unusual shape. An Olmec bowl, of the type dated to the late Early Formative occupation of Tlapacoya (Fig. 63b; Tolstoy and Paradis 1970), depicts a jaguar face with crossed bands in the mouth, like the Altar 4 jaguar, but the face is abstract and has the trough-shaped eyes characteristic of San Lorenzo Phase designs. In general, the La Venta ledge motifs seem less stylized, and do not follow the conventional forms seen on Group II monuments and San Lorenzo Phase ceramics.

Laguna de los Cerros Monument 19, a Group I monument (Fig. 64b; de la Fuente 1973: No. 110), depicts profile dragon masks in low relief along the side of the cape. Conventionalized representations of the dragon mask on late Early Formative Olmec ceramics (Fig. 63a, b) have flame brows like the Laguna de los Cerros example, but the dragon mask is elongated, and the eyes and teeth are rendered in the usual bracket or trough-shaped form. The Laguna de los Cerros example is less stylized and rigid, with teeth represented more naturalistically as multiple half-circles.

Few of the common Olmec ceramic motifs occur on Group I sculptures. The known examples do not seem to correlate with the standard versions of motifs on late Early Formative Olmec ceramics, dated between 1150 and 900 B.C. Relationships with designs on jade and other forms of portable art of a probable Middle Formative date are not apparent. It may be that the motifs on Group I monuments

represent early forms of designs, prior to the development of the standard forms employed on late Early Formative Olmec ceramics and on Group II monuments.

Sculptures from outside the Heartland. At present, only one site beyond the Olmec area appears to have sculptures that may relate to the Group I style. Sin Cabezas in Guatemala has three known sculptures, all representing seated, cross-legged figures on rounded platforms or pedestals. These sculptures are thought to be intimately linked with the heartland Olmec style, and have been compared to naturalistic sculptures like the San Antonio Plaza wrestler (Figs. 46, 47; Shook 1950; Parsons and Jenson 1965: 143, Pl. 19). Although the three Sin Cabezas sculptures are related by pose and general composition, they do not appear to represent a highly unified style. Monument 2, a seated figure holding a baby, is carved with three-dimensional costume ornament, but the overall carving style is rather rough. This could be a question of erosion, but the impression remains that it is not as finely carved as the other two monuments. Monument 3 appears carefully modeled with rounded thighs and tapering fingers, but has a huge pot-belly unlike the other sculptures. Monument 1 (Proskouriakoff 1968: Fig. 7) seems closest to the Olmec style, particularly that of the sculptures of Group I. Although erosion and mutilation have obscured some details, the figure appears to be naturalistically modeled, but is carved without great interest in three-dimensional detail, recalling the style of Group Ib sculptures.

The archaeological context of the Sin Cabezas monuments is not useful in dating the sculptures, since they were apparently re-erected by a Late Classic culture (Shook 1950: 63; Parsons and Jenson 1965: 143-4). The relationship between Sin Cabezas and the Olmec heartland remains unclear; more excavation is required to establish the chronological position of the sculptures at this site. Stylistically, the monuments appear to blend Early Formative Olmec traits with elements more characteristic of Middle to Late Formative Guatemalan sculpture, such as the pedestal base and pot-belly. Perhaps

these elements first appeared as a local variation of the Olmec style, and subsequently became major elements in the development of Guatemalan sculpture in the Middle Formative.

Summary. The archaeological context of San Lorenzo sculpture suggests that Group I monuments should be dated to the Early Formative. Stylistic analysis demonstrates that Group I is probably not contemporary with Group II, believed to date between 1150 and 900 B.C. Several chronological correlations for Group II cluster around 900 B.C., and it is possible that the whole group dates to the latter part of the San Lorenzo Phase, *ca.* 1000–900 B.C. Since it is clear that the Group I style does not postdate the Group II monuments, they should be placed prior to this group. Chicharras Phase basalt

fragments suggest a highly developed sculptural style by 1250–1150 B.C., and it appears likely that Group I has a date contemporary with that phase, although it is also possible that it dates *ca.* 1150–900 B.C., if a shortened sculptural chronology is indicated by the placement of Group II in the San Lorenzo B Phase. The correlations between San Lorenzo Phase ceramic motifs and Group II monuments, however, suggest a longer span for this group. This would push Group I back to the Chicharras Phase, a chronological position that seems likely, given the evidence of Chicharras Phase carving and the lack of specific relationships between Group I sculptural motifs and San Lorenzo Phase ceramic motifs.

Olmec Relief Carving

CRITERIA FOR THE ANALYSIS of relief carving differ from those of sculpture in the round in that subtle variations of modeling are less prominent, particularly in low-relief depictions. Nevertheless, some variations in modeling are evident, and these prove useful in defining the stylistic traits when combined with other criteria. Composition is a key feature in analysis of relief, particularly the disposition of figures within a space, the use of negative space, and the relationship between forms in the representation. In addition, pose, costume, and iconography are relevant in this analysis. Although a comprehensive examination of Olmec relief is not presented here, certain broad chronological trends are brought out. The chronological alignment of the reliefs is based on the archaeological context of heartland Olmec reliefs and on stylistic relationships to archaeologically dated reliefs from beyond the heartland area.

The stylistic groups formulated for sculpture in the round are employed as the framework for organizing the reliefs chronologically. The position taken here is that reliefs appearing on monuments

with figural sculpture assigned to one of the stylistic groups should be considered contemporary with that group. Pure relief sculptures with a definite archaeological context and reliefs stylistically related to archaeologically dated reliefs can be assigned to one of the groups based on the correlation with the time span suggested for that group. Three major relief groups are contemporary with the figural sculpture groups; a fourth group, composed of reliefs with late chronological correlations, appears to postdate Groups I–III.

Group I Reliefs on Altars

Reliefs on La Venta Altars 3, 4, and 5 and San Lorenzo Monument 14 can be assigned to Group I based on their contextual association with altar figures assigned to that group. The suggested date for Group I is *ca.* 1250–1150 B.C. Group I reliefs depict rather simple scenes with one or two figures silhouetted against a flat background of open or negative space. The seated, cross-legged position is the most common pose in reliefs of this group, but

there is one example of a standing figure with slightly bent knees (Altar 3; de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 3). The figures are carved with softened edges, and there is some modeling of facial features and hands.⁸ Costume elements overlap one another in some cases, but the forms are simplified and the total effect is uncluttered. Certain iconographic parallels are evident, especially in terms of costuming, between Group I reliefs and Group I sculptured figures.

La Venta Altars 4 and 5. Altar 5 (Fig. 33; de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 5) side reliefs depict human figures holding anthropomorphic-jaguar babies. Altar 4 (Fig. 31) represents a prisoner figure attached by a rope to the main altar figure. On both altars, the relief figures are displayed against a broad background of open space. Costuming is rendered with some overlapping forms, but retains a clear presentation of the individual parts. The figures are carved with rounded edges, and there is some suggestion of modeling in the treatment of the faces, hands, and feet. One Altar 5 figure wears a conical hat, like that of the main altar figure; the other two figures wear wide-brimmed hats with unusual decorative elements. Two of the relief figures wear rounded pendants, like that of the main altar figure, and capes like those worn by several Group I figures.

San Lorenzo Monument 14. Monument 14 (Fig. 36), like La Venta Altar 4, represents a prisoner figure, originally attached by a rope to the main altar figure. The prisoner figure has facial features resembling certain colossal heads with parted lips revealing their teeth (de la Fuente 1973: Láms. 16, 178). The figure wears a star-shaped pendant and a tasseled rope similar to those represented on San Lorenzo Monument 34 of Group I (Fig. 5), and a broad-brimmed hat recalling those on La Venta Altar 5 reliefs. Modeling of the face and hands is

relatively rounded, and the edges of the silhouette are softened.

Group II Reliefs

San Lorenzo Monuments 30 and 58 are pure relief carvings that can be dated to the Early Formative, based on their San Lorenzo Phase archaeological context (de la Fuente 1973: Nos. 155, 183). Like the altar reliefs, they portray simple compositions with single figures silhouetted against negative space; but the carvings are in extremely low relief, outlined by incision, and they depict non-human subjects. They could be placed contemporary with either Groups I or II, but an attribution to Group II is favored, since both reliefs depict grotesque jaguar masks more closely resembling the style and iconography of Group II figures. Profile jaguar masks are represented on the Group I Altar 5 reliefs (Fig. 33), but they lack the stylized, elongated upper lip and fangs of the two San Lorenzo reliefs. There are no Group II altars with representational relief figures, which may in itself be a significant factor in terms of relief chronology. It could be that relief figures first appeared as a form of subsidiary decoration on altars, and subsequently developed as a separate art form, no longer used in combination with three-dimensional figural sculptures.

Clellow (1974: 135–41, Tables 19, 20) places reliefs like San Lorenzo Monuments 30 and 58 in the San Lorenzo Phase based on their Early Formative archaeological context, and his belief that simple abstract and simple representational reliefs chronologically precede relief panels of a historic, symbolic, or complex abstract nature. All of the La Venta altar reliefs classified in Group I (Altars 3, 4, and 5) are described as having historical content by Clellow (1974: Table 19); and, although he dates these altars and San Lorenzo Monument 14 to the Early Formative, he suggests that the relief carvings were added much later, towards the end of the Middle Formative (Clellow 1974: 121–3; Table 18). But, as noted above, the relief figures on La Venta Altars 4 and 5 and San Lorenzo Monument

⁸ San Lorenzo Monument 42, a mutilated columnar relief found in San Lorenzo A deposits (de la Fuente 1973: No. 167), is carved in a similar style, and provides some archaeological evidence for an early dating of this type of relief.

14 seem rather intimately related to the central niche figures; in one case, the relief figure is tied by a rope and attached to the main altar figure (Fig. 31). To add the rope and prisoner later would have required recarving the main figure of Altar 4, a proposition that seems highly unlikely. In addition, if Clewlow's theory were correct, it would mean that San Lorenzo carvers disinterred Monument 14 from the San Lorenzo Phase rubble in order to carve the side reliefs, which apparently was their sole artistic act in the Middle Formative, since Clewlow places all other San Lorenzo monuments in the Early Formative. Because Clewlow's seriation of the reliefs emphasizes iconography rather than style, he is forced to illogical conclusions, such as placing all reliefs with historic content later, even though some appear on Early Formative altars. As will be demonstrated below, there are specific stylistic traits that separate Early and Middle Formative reliefs.

Group II Reliefs from outside the Heartland

Certain Olmec petroglyphs from beyond the heartland area may be dated ca. 1150–900 B.C., based on archaeological excavations at the relief sites. This span of dates suggests contemporaneity with the Group II reliefs. These petroglyphs differ stylistically from Group II heartland reliefs, and may exhibit some regional variation of the Olmec style; but, since so few Group II reliefs are known at present, and no heartland examples depict human figures, it may not be possible to assess accurately the relationships.

Pijijiapan. Navarrete (1974: 3–7) excavated Early Formative ceramics, corresponding to the Cuadros–Jocotal Phases of Pacific coastal Chiapas, from deposits at the base of rock carvings from Pijijiapan (Figs. 65–67). No other ceramic components were found, and a nearby mound contained an identical Early Formative component directly underlying a late Postclassic level. This strongly suggests that the carvings date ca. 1150–900 B.C. (Table I). Stone 2 depicts a profile jaguar wearing an elongated

mouth mask with a projecting fang-like gum like that of San Lorenzo Monument 30 in Group II (Fig. 65; de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 155). It has L-shaped eyes, like those of several Group II sculptured figures, and an unusual headdress with flanged elements running down the back. This carving seems closely related to the heartland Olmec style, particularly monuments of Group II. Other petroglyphs at the site employ Olmec elements, but reflect significant stylistic differences. Standing human figures on Stones 1 and 2 (Figs. 66, 67) wear thick belts, loincloths, or skirts, and one figure carries a cestus object, all of which are typical Olmec costume elements. But, unlike relief representations of Groups I and II, the composition is compressed, with figures overlapping one another, rather than sharply silhouetted against open space. Furthermore, the figures are unusually massive, with broad shoulders and heavy legs, and are posed in a striding, stiff-legged position. Stone 1 is unusual in that it has a stela form carved in planar relief with figures framed by horizontal bands.

Group III Reliefs

Several La Venta reliefs appear to be qualitatively different from Groups I and II heartland reliefs. These reliefs are termed Group III, since the available data suggest some chronological overlap with Group III figures in the round. Although costuming of human figures in Group III recalls Group I reliefs (we lack comparative examples from Group II), the Group III figures are more massive and the relief composition is complex, with a rhythmic repetition of lines, numerous overlapping forms, and little negative space. The carving style is crisp and planar, in contrast to the softer modeling of Group I reliefs, or the incised low reliefs of Group II.

La Venta Stelae 2 and 3. Heizer (1967: 38) believes that both La Venta stelae were carved contemporaneously, and may have been the product of a single sculptural school (Figs. 68, 69). The composition of the reliefs is similar, depicting central figures with tall, elaborate headdresses, surrounded

by numerous “flying” figures wearing beak-like jaguar masks. Heizer (1967: 36) suggests that the composition is organized in terms of isometric perspective, with the background figures placed above, rather than behind, the main figures. The central figures on Stela 3 are posed in profile, whereas the figure on Stela 2 is positioned frontally. This probably does not represent a significant difference, since frontal and profile figures are sometimes depicted together, and sharing a central position (Fig. 74). One major difference between the two reliefs is that Stela 2 is rendered in relief higher than that of Stela 3 (this is particularly true of the central figure); it is also carved on an irregular surface. Perhaps the natural shape of the carving surface in this case suggested a more three-dimensional treatment to the sculptor.

Unlike the Groups I and II heartland Olmec reliefs, the figures on the two La Venta stelae are compressed into a crowded composition with little negative or open space. Both stelae display a rhythmic quality in the representation of form, evident in the way the cape outlines the central figure’s shoulders and hangs in pleated layers. Both are carved with sharp edges outlining the forms, rather than with the softened edges characteristic of Group I reliefs. Although the Stela 2 reliefs have a somewhat modeled quality like that of Group I altar reliefs, Stela 3 is carved in a distinctive planar fashion. This planar carving style recalls Pijijiapan Stone 1, and, like the Pijijiapan reliefs, the La Venta stelae depict broad-shouldered figures in a crowded composition; but the figures do not overlap one another, except for the uppermost figure of Stela 3, which partially covers a serpent figure. The beaked jaguar mask depicted on the La Venta stelae is unlike those characteristic of Group II heartland reliefs and the Pijijiapan petroglyphs. More important, the Pijijiapan and Group II reliefs do not exhibit the sophisticated orchestration of lines and forms evident in the La Venta stelae.

La Venta Monument 19. Drucker, Heizer, and Squier (1959: 198–200) note that Monument 19 (Fig. 70) is similar to La Venta Stela 3, in that both

reliefs have figures with pointed toes, and both depict jaguar-masked figures enclosed by a serpent. Other notable similarities include the arched foot shape, the slightly bent knees (present only on the subsidiary figures on Stela 3), and the nose bead, a costume element unknown in reliefs of Groups I and II. Although the face of the figure appears somewhat modeled, the crisp planar body carving resembles that of Stela 3. Like both Stelae 2 and 3, Monument 19 is characterized by a rhythmic composition evident in the repetition of lines, such as the curved back of the figure that echoes the line of the cape and the snake’s body, and the layered effect of the collar and the snake’s rattles. Like the stelae, Monument 19 is carved with little open or negative space.

Group III Reliefs from outside the Heartland

A number of reliefs from beyond the Olmec area relate stylistically to Group III reliefs, and early Middle Formative archaeological dates, between 900 and 650 B.C., have been suggested for them. But these dates cannot be considered secure because, in all cases, there is both an Early and a Middle Formative occupation of the zone, in contrast to the situation at Pijijiapan, which can be more securely dated to the Early Formative, based on the limited chronological span of the occupation of the site.

Las Victorias. Incised petroglyphs from Las Victorias, Chalchuapa, El Salvador (Joralemon 1971: Fig. 13), depict standing and seated figures wearing heavy belts and rounded pectorals like those on relief figures of Groups I and III (no human figures are known from heartland Group II reliefs, at present). One standing figure wears a headdress with a ball on top, reminiscent of the headdress of one Altar 5 relief figure, and almost identical to that on a Group II seated figure in the round (Fig. 13). A number of costume elements parallel Group I and II figures, and the overall composition is similar to that of reliefs of those groups, with individual figures silhouetted against blank or empty space. Resemblances to Group III reliefs are also apparent.

The standing figure wears a cape with peaked corners, which stands out stiffly, like the capes on Stelae 2 and 3, and contrasts with the treatment on the La Venta Altar 5 reliefs where the cape is draped over the shoulders (de la Fuente 1973: Lám. 5). The Las Victorias figure, however, is depicted with a unique shoulder cape of a winged form that comes high off the shoulders, rather than outlining the shoulder curve, as is characteristic of Group III heartland reliefs. The clubs held by two of the figures recall the clubs or insignia depicted on Stela 2. In general, the reliefs share elements with both Groups I and III reliefs, and are difficult to classify stylistically.

Sharer's (1974: 169) excavations in the Chalchupa zone have defined an Early Formative component related to the Cuadros Phase (the ceramic component associated with the Pijijiapan petroglyphs). The excavators note that the Middle Formative Colos ceramic complex (900–650 B.C.) may be Olmec in origin, and believe it is reasonable to date the boulder sculptures to the early Middle Formative. Nevertheless, Grove (in Sharer 1974: 178) questions whether the Colos ceramic component is really Olmec or is part of a larger Middle Formative ceramic tradition found widely distributed in Mesoamerica. Hence, the archaeological dating of the petroglyphs is not secure, since they could have been carved in Cuadros Phase times (as were the Pijijiapan carvings) or in the subsequent Middle Formative phase. Unfortunately, the stylistic data are not conclusive in providing alignment with any of the heartland relief groups presently known.

Chalcatzingo. Grove (1974: 115) dates the major occupation of Chalcatzingo to the early Middle Formative, and believes that the Olmec reliefs date to this epoch, between 900 and 800 B.C., although he maintains that there is nothing Olmec about the ceramic complex at this time. Nevertheless, as noted above, there is a clear Olmec-related Early Formative occupation, and the reliefs could date to this period.

Stylistic and iconographic parallels between

Group III heartland reliefs and Chalcatzingo rock carvings are notable. La Venta Stelae 2 and 3 kneeling figures wear heavy belts with pendant bands, carry staffs or clubs (possibly in a threatening posture), and wear jaguar masks with beak-like mouths, as do the figures of Chalcatzingo Relief II (Figs. 68, 69; Joralemon 1971: Fig. 259). Some of the La Venta figures also wear diaper-like loincloths and belts with a central brooch similar to those on Relief II. Although the central figures of the La Venta stelae are massive, the subsidiary figures are more delicate, like the Chalcatzingo figures, and relate more closely in terms of costume and pose. This suggests that the subsidiary figures are iconographically linked to the Chalcatzingo figures, possibly representing the same class of warriors or supernaturals. Other parallels with the Chalcatzingo reliefs are more purely stylistic. Chalcatzingo Relief I (Joralemon 1971: Fig. 258) is carved with a rhythmic repetition of lines evident in the niche, scrolls, cloud volutes, and the short cape that outlines the shoulders of the figure, as in the Group III heartland reliefs. The relatively crowded composition of this relief also recalls Groups III reliefs. The niche figure is broad-shouldered, and wears a tall, elaborate headdress and a skirt or knee-length pants, possibly indicating that it is linked iconographically to the central figures of the La Venta stelae.

A new relief from Chalcatzingo (Fig. 71) correlates closely with heartland Olmec reliefs. Grove (1974: 117) suggests that Chalcatzingo Relief XII is so similar to La Venta monumental art that it may have been carved by Gulf Coast artists. The figure wears a heavy, layered belt, a loincloth with pendant bands, and a helmet headdress that are almost identical to the costuming on La Venta Monument 19 (Fig. 70). The carving is crisp and planar, and the figure is surrounded by forms like those on Monument 19, although the composition is not so crowded. La Venta Monument 42 (Fig. 72) also suggests direct parallels with the Chalcatzingo reliefs. Although quite fragmentary, it is carved in a crisp, planar style, and appears to represent several recumbent or flying figures like those on Chalcat-

zingo Reliefs IV and XII (Fig. 71; Joralemon 1970: Fig. 261).

A relief figure from San Lorenzo, Monument 56 (de la Fuente 1973: No. 181), although severely mutilated, suggests parallels with the Chalcatzingo reliefs. It depicts a rapacious animal attacking a human figure, a theme also represented on Chalcatzingo Reliefs 3, 4, and 5 (Joralemon 1971: Figs. 260–2; Relief 3 is incorrectly drawn—the jaguar is licking a human arm, rather than a branch). The delicate legs, rounded feet, and knee and ankle bands of the San Lorenzo figure are all reminiscent of the Chalcatzingo petroglyphs. The archaeological associations of the San Lorenzo relief are not clear. Beverido (1970: 184–5) records Palangana Phase (*ca.* 600–400 B.C.) ceramics at a level five centimeters above Monument 56, and mentions no other ceramic material from the trench. It is possible that the monument was buried after the San Lorenzo Phase; but, since virtually all other San Lorenzo monuments excavated under controlled conditions pertain to San Lorenzo B levels, it would be unusual if this monument were the only one associated with later deposits. Nevertheless, it remains a possibility, especially since there are specific parallels with the Chalcatzingo reliefs.

Bernal (1969: 149–50) postulates that the Chalcatzingo reliefs belong to a colonial Olmec style, indicating that the art is the product of a colony of Olmec occupying an underdeveloped region outside the heartland. He believes this style is somewhat distinct from the heartland style, though clearly inspired by the art of that area. But the numerous parallels between La Venta Group III reliefs and Chalcatzingo reliefs, and the relationship of San Lorenzo Monument 56 to certain Chalcatzingo reliefs, suggest that at least some of the rock carvings were executed by artists trained in the heartland Olmec area.

Viejón. Stela 1 from Viejón in central Veracruz (Fig. 74) depicts two massive figures, one posed frontally with splayed legs and the other in a profile striding position, recalling the figures on the La Venta stelae. Like these figures, the Viejón frontal

figure has a cape outlining its shoulders. The carving is crisp and planar like the heartland Group III style, but the composition lacks the complexity of these reliefs. The headdress with a projecting brim and the wide belt with pendant bands is similar to those on La Venta Monument 19. Certain iconographic parallels are also evident with the Pijijiapan petroglyphs, for example, the broad object held by the profile figure and the serrated headdress of the frontal figure; the planar carving style also recalls Pijijiapan Stone 1 (Figs. 65, 66).

The archaeological context of the Viejón monument is ambiguous. Medellín Zenil (*n.d.*: 7) excavated around the base of the monument and discovered Preclassic ceramics, which he dates 1000–500 B.C., revising an earlier date of 1500–1200 B.C. (Medellín Zenil 1960: 81). These ceramics, however, are related to the Lower Remojadas Phase (García Payón 1971: 518), dated to the Late Preclassic by most archaeologists (MacNeish *et al.* 1970: Fig. 154). Relationships to the Early Formative Pijijiapan petroglyphs are evident, but the parallels with Group III heartland reliefs appear more pronounced.

Chiapas Reliefs. Monument 1 from Padre Piedra, Chiapas (Fig. 75), provides the most direct parallel with the Viejón monument. This Central Depression relief is believed to date to the early Middle Formative, since the major occupation of the site is placed in the Chiapa II Phase (*ca.* 900–700 B.C.; Green and Lowe 1967: 55). Nevertheless, the main component in stratigraphic pits near the sculpture pertains to the Chiapa I Phase (Navarrete 1960: 12). Like the Viejón relief and La Venta Stela 2, Monument 1 represents a frontal splay-legged figure with massive shoulders, a broad collar, and a cape outlining the shoulders. Both the Viejón and Padre Piedra figures wear wide belts with tripartite pendant bands, and are carved in the crisp, planar style characteristic of Group III heartland reliefs.

The high-relief frontal figure from Tiltetec (Fig. 51) has been compared to La Venta Stela 2 (Fig. 68), but it clearly employs more local stylistic elements than the other Group III reliefs from beyond the

heartland. Nevertheless, it provides evidence relevant to dating the Group III style, since Tiltepec and its sister site Tzutzuculi were Middle Formative sites, apparently occupied between 700 and 550 (Chiapa III). La Venta Monument 71 (Fig. 73) is a relief directly inspired by the style of sculpture found at these two sites, and, although it differs markedly from the heartland Group III relief style, it is probably roughly contemporary. For lack of data, it is not possible at present to work out the exact relationship between the Chiapas sites and La Venta, but it is surely a complex interaction reflected in an exchange of ideas.

Archaeologists excavating in the areas of Chalcatzingo, Chalchuapa, and Padre Piedra agree on an early Middle Formative date for the reliefs here related to Group III. As noted, reliefs from these sites might be linked to Early Formative components; but, given the specific crossties with Tiltepec, and the concentration of Group III reliefs at La Venta, the only major Olmec site with an archaeologically demonstrated Middle Formative sculpture tradition, a Middle Formative date appears likely. The relationship with Tiltepec would indicate a late Middle Formative placement, but an early Middle Formative date is more probable, since none of the other above-mentioned Olmec-related relief sites appears to have late Middle Formative components that could be correlated with the sculptures.

Group IV Reliefs

A number of La Venta reliefs show stylistic traits different from those of the Group III reliefs described above. These reliefs are all assigned to Group IV, although they do not appear to represent a highly unified style (Table II). Group IV reliefs seem to employ stylistic elements characteristic of later Mesoamerican art styles, many of which may be linked to the Izapan and Proto-Mayan styles. Although these styles are usually dated after the

Olmec period, it appears that some features developed earlier. Volutes and tenoned scrolls, as well as an overall composition that is rather crowded with forms, are all elements shared by reliefs of Groups III and IV and the Izapan and Proto-Mayan styles (although volutes and scrolls, at present, are known only from Chalcatzingo reliefs of Group III and heartland reliefs of Group IV). Other features, such as multiple horizontal bands, certain grotesque foot shapes, tripartite scroll brows, the bifurcated tongue, and glyphic inscriptions, first appear in Group IV reliefs. Some of these elements have parallels in the Izapan and Proto-Mayan styles, suggesting that they date late in the Olmec sequence. Group IV reliefs do not exhibit strong relationships to reliefs of the other groups, and appear to postdate these reliefs. Izapan and Proto-Mayan parallels and the La Venta Phase IV archaeological context of two Group IV reliefs indicate a probable date between 600 and 400 B.C.

La Venta Monuments 13 and 63. These two La Venta Monuments are stylistically distinct from other known Olmec reliefs (Joralemon 1971: Figs. 4, 132). Monument 13 depicts a figure with a plumed headdress, beaded necklace, and tasseled sandals, none of which is characteristic Olmec costume.⁹ The legs of the figure are delicate, and are carved with pointed knee caps and a sharp indentation at the back of the knee, unlike those on other Olmec relief figures. Kaminaljuyú Stela 9 depicts a figure with similar legs, wearing a beaded necklace and a topknot of hair like that on Monument 13; the dating of Stela 9 remains controversial, but Coe (in Proskouriakoff 1968: 131–2, Fig. 7) suggests that the archaeological associations are ca. 500 B.C. Like Monument 13, Stela 9 is carved in a planar style, but the composition of the La Venta relief is simplified, with the figure silhouetted against open space. The most unusual feature of Monument 13 is the

⁹ The nose bead represented on this figure recalls those of La Venta Stela 3 and Monument 19 of Group III, and is another element shared by Groups III and IV and the Izapan style, particularly monuments from Kaminaljuyú.

row of glyph-like elements, which, along with the stylistic relationships to Stela 9, suggest that the relief postdates those of Group III.

The facial features and headdress of the figure on Monument 63 have some relationship with those on Monument 13, but the composition and iconography are distinct. A human figure and a serpent are tightly grouped in a confrontation scene, probably depicting a battle between human and supernatural forces, like that on San Lorenzo Monument 56. The reptile or serpent has unusual tripartite scroll brows and flippers. Tripartite scroll brows are represented on Kaminaljuyú Monument 19 (Quirarte 1973: Fig. 11a), a monument believed to date to the late Middle Formative. Scroll brows of this type also appear on Monte Albán jaguar effigy urns (Fig. 66a); Scott (n.d.: 87–91) notes that this variety of urn first appears in Monte Albán Phase I–C, ca. 350–150 B.C. He believes that the urns represent an Olmec revival, rather than a direct influence from the Olmec style. On the other hand, Bernal (1971: 47) dates the end of the Monte Albán I Phase ca. 400 B.C., which suggests that there may be some overlap with the end of the Olmec occupation of La Venta, and a direct relationship between Olmec and Monte Albán I motifs.

La Venta Monument 6. Monument 6 (Joralemon 1971: Fig. 145) was probably carved relatively late in the Olmec sequence. This is one of the few La Venta monuments found in an archaeological context; it was located in Phase IV deposits of Complex A (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 229). It is probable that it was carved specifically as a receptacle for a burial or offering. The facial features of the jaguar carved on the coffer recall certain Group II motifs, such as the L-shaped eyes and angular mouth mask, but the design is more complex than those renditions. The figure has a tripartite brow over the L-shaped eyes and a bifurcated tongue; these suggest parallels with the Monte Albán effigy urn (Fig. 64a), which is dated as contemporary with Phase IV of La Venta, or slightly later.

La Venta Monuments 25 and 27. Monument 25 (Fig. 76) is a schist slab carved with a low-relief

jaguar mask. The La Venta excavators believe that the monument was set up in Phase IV (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 206, Fig. 59). The muzzle seems rather abstract and angular, like that of Monument 74 (Fig. 28), and, like that figure, it has a bracket-shaped upper lip, but the mouth form is more complex, with geometricized fangs and gums, and is framed by horizontal bands. La Venta Monument 27 (Drucker *et al.* 1959: Fig. 60) also depicts an abstract jaguar face framed by a horizontal band. These two elements appear on Tres Zapotes Stela A, an Izapan-style monument (Coe 1965b: 773; Stirling 1943: Fig. 3), indicating that the stylistic correlations for these forms are relatively late.

La Venta Monument 26. Monument 26 is described as a conventionalized jaguar mask, carved of a soft stone, like Monument 25 (Drucker *et al.* 1959: 206, Fig. 60). Coe (1965b: 755) believes that the upper portion of the design represents cloud volutes and sky volutes (tenoned scrolls) like those depicted on Chalcatzingo Relief I and some Izapan-style reliefs (Quirarte 1973: Pls. III, IX; Joralemon 1971: Fig. 258). Izapan parallels are also evident in the crowded composition, and the presence of what appear to be small-scale figures. The Izapan style is usually dated to the Late Preclassic and into the Protoclassic, postdating the Olmec period: it appears, however, that some features of the style developed earlier. Parsons (1967) dates some Izapan monuments to his Olmecoid period, ca. 600–400 B.C., and believes that the scroll motif first developed in this epoch.¹⁰ Miles (1965) proposes that there are several chronological periods represented in the monuments of Izapa, correlating with the Providencia through Arenal Phases of Kaminaljuyú (late Middle Preclassic to Protoclassic).

La Venta Altar 7. Altar 7 (de la Fuente 1973: No. 7) is another monument that seems to have Izapan parallels. Although the monument is poorly preserved, a number of small-scale figures remain. The rear view of the monument (Fig. 77) is quite

¹⁰ Chalcatzingo Relief I, believed to date ca. 900–800 B.C., depicts numerous scroll forms.

important in that it depicts several Izapan-style elements. Two fragmentary figures are represented; one has a bent leg with a knobbed knee and another leg terminating in a grotesque foot with three elongated toes curved around a fourth thumb-like toe. Similar figures with grotesque feet and pointed knees from Izapa and Kaminaljuyú (Fig. 78) are dated to the late Middle Preclassic Providencia Phase, *ca.* 500–300 B.C., according to Miles (1965: 252), and this convention is believed to have had a very limited time span. Quirarte (1973: 21, Table 1) concurs with Miles in a late Middle Preclassic date

for this type of representation and identifies the foot as crocodilian (a toad foot is an equally plausible identification). The fact that the Olmec example represents an isolated occurrence suggests that this form originated in the Izapan art style.

The Altar 7 niche frames a face that is almost totally obliterated, except for a beard and a well-modeled ear with a teardrop-shaped earring. An oval niche enclosing a figure is present on a Tiltepec monument and on Izapa Monument 2 (Figs. 54, 57), and it may be that this form of niche was a Middle Formative development.

Interpretation

The Early Formative Style: Groups I and II

THE ANALYSIS of various lines of archaeological evidence indicates that figural sculptures and reliefs of Groups I and II should date to the Early Formative. Chronological correlations for Group II sculptures cluster around the San Lorenzo Phase, *ca.* 1150–900 B.C. Group I probably dates to the Chicharras Phase (1250–1150 B.C.), although it is possible that its dates are somewhat later, *ca.* 1150–1000 B.C., contemporary with the San Lorenzo A Phase.

The stylistic relationship and chronological position of the colossal heads relative to Early Formative figural sculpture cannot be clearly established, since the carving of facial features on both Groups I and II is quite sensitive and is comparable to the treatment of the colossal heads. It may be that the heads span a relatively long period of time. The earliest heads apparently date to the Chicharras Phase, based on fragments of what appear to be colossal heads in early levels at both Laguna de los Cerros and San Lorenzo. But some heads, significantly not those from San Lorenzo and La Venta, exhibit stylistic differences that suggest they may date to the Middle Formative.

If Group I is the earliest known style of sculpture in the heartland area (contemporary with some of the colossal heads), the resulting sequence of Olmec sculptural chronology is one beginning with a highly developed naturalistic style without clear precedents. Even if the chronological placement of Groups I and II were to be reversed, and Group II was considered the older style, the problem would not be resolved, since Group II by no means represents an incipient or “archaic” style. Group II seems to be a more rigid and conventionalized style than Group I, employing certain standard poses, carving methods and iconographic features. Group I has its own specific standards, but the variety of expression within this framework is much greater. There is something almost monotonous about the style of Group II sculptures, especially those of Group IIa, which exhibit a rather limited range of body postures and costuming. This could be the result of standardization of certain representations. Perhaps, at this time, Olmec art was almost mass-produced. The Group II style is found widely dispersed at a number of sites in the heartland, as well as at the four major centers; artists may have been called upon to produce many sculptures to satisfy the needs of other sites as the Olmec moved out-

ward from the major centers. Around this time, Olmec relief carving spread beyond the heartland area, and relief may have become more important in the heartland. Our limited sample suggests that relief carvings are subordinate to altar figures in Group I, but appear as separate compositions in Group II.

The Middle Formative Style: Groups III and IV

Group III figural sculptures clearly postdate both Groups I and II. Stylistic trends observed in Group III figures reflect both an attenuation of the patterns observed in Group II and the intrusion of foreign ideas. Sculptural detail is even further reduced when compared with that of Group II monuments, and the angularity of the sculptures is greatly heightened. The foreign elements in the Group III style, such as pedestal bases, angular shoulder pads, and atypical facial features characterized by blank or closed eyes and triangular noses, appear to have a southern source. Stylistic correlation with Pacific Slope sculptures from Chiapas, dated *ca.* 700–550 B.C., suggest a late Middle Formative date; and other stylistic parallels can be observed with Guatemalan sculptures that range in date from the late Middle Preclassic through the Late Preclassic, and possibly into the Protoclassic. One Group III monument is carved of sandstone, believed to be a material used only in Phase IV at La Venta (*ca.* 600–400 B.C.).

Given the evidence, it would appear the Group III style of figural sculpture dates *ca.* 700–400 B.C. The foreign elements in the Group III style appear to represent borrowings contemporary with the Chiapa III and Providencia Phases, rather than Olmec innovations later adopted in the south. This line of reasoning is based on the rarity of Group III sculptures, and their relative simplicity when compared to the southern examples.¹¹ If this is the case,

¹¹ Moreover, La Venta Monument 71 (Fig. 73) provides definite evidence of direct borrowing from a Middle Formative Pacific Slope style.

some hiatus may have occurred in the carving of free-standing figures around the beginning of the Middle Formative. There are, however, certain relationships between Groups II and III, both thematic and stylistic, that suggest some stylistic continuity. The resolution of this apparent inconsistency will have to await future investigations.

The dating of Group III relief sculpture surely overlaps that of Group III figural sculpture, but it appears likely that the two styles are not completely contemporary. It seems clear that Group III reliefs were carved around the same time as the Olmec-related relief from Tiltepec (Fig. 51), a one-period site dating *ca.* 700–550 B.C. Nevertheless, archaeologists favor an earlier date, between 900 and 650 B.C., for other reliefs related to Group III, and, in the case of Chalcatzingo, the suggested date is between 900 and 800 B.C. Although it could be argued that these reliefs from beyond the heartland might date to the Early Formative, the evidence suggests a Middle Formative date, most probably the early Middle Formative, since the sites lack late Middle Formative components.¹² The number of Group III heartland reliefs is small (more are known from beyond the heartland), and it seems unlikely that the style had a long time span, so it is suggested that the dates fall between 900 and 650 B.C. This would make the Olmec-inspired monument at Tiltepec one of the earliest at the site, *ca.* 700 B.C.

Group IV relief carvings appear to have Izapan and Proto-Mayan relationships, or other elements atypical of the Olmec style. The group does not form a cohesive entity, and may actually include several substyles of slightly different chronological epochs; but all substyles appear to incorporate non-classical or evolved Olmec stylistic elements. The span suggested for this group is somewhere between 600 and 400 B.C. No three-dimensional sculptures have been attributed to this group, but it

¹² In addition, the demonstrated correlation of Group IV with the end of the La Venta sequence and the stylistic distinctions between Group III and IV relief suggest an early Middle Formative date for Group III relief.

seems likely that the crude style of Group III figural sculpture overlaps somewhat with it.

Groups III and IV contrast with Groups I and II in that they include a greater variety of substyles and are more difficult to characterize as a stylistic entity. Group III figural sculpture includes a number of different crude styles. The relief style of Group III is more homogeneous, but the reliefs of Group IV present a number of diverse styles. The homogeneity of sculptures in both Groups I and II is probably due to strict canons of representation in the Early Formative. Later, in the early Middle Formative, Olmec artists concentrated on relief carving and formulated a unified relief style; but interest in sculpture in the round declined and the stylistic canons were no longer clear, permitting elements from foreign styles to be employed in a somewhat random fashion. Although the stylistic diversity of late Middle Formative Group IV relief carvings cannot be linked specifically to an artistic decline, it is probably related to the general decline of Olmec culture, which now became the receptor, rather than the innovator, of stylistic change.

The Origins of the Olmec Style

Some authors have proposed that certain Group III figural sculptures represent an early or primitive Olmec style (Wicke 1971: 140; Stirling 1968: 36). Certainly, their relative crudity is suggestive of some incipient style. But, the chronological correlations for sculptures of this group are late in the Olmec sequence; therefore, the style seems to be "degenerative" rather than "archaic."

The question remains what prototypes could have led to the development of the sophisticated carving of the Early Formative Olmec. Clewlow (1974: 27) suggests that wood carving preceded stone carving. Since wood carvings would not be preserved in the humid climate of the Olmec heartland (except in bogs), the early aspects of the style would be lost to posterity. It is possible that ceramic figurine modeling could present another prototype for the stone sculptural art. Skillfully modeled ceramic figurines

are known as early as 1350–1250 B.C. at San Lorenzo. But the techniques of ceramic modeling seem less related to stone carving than do those of wood carving. Even if wood carving was the original carving medium among the Olmec, one would not expect that the earliest stone monuments were sophisticated sculptures like those of Group I.

Heizer (1971: 56) and Coe (n.d.: 17) have both suggested that the Tuxtla mountain zone, the source of stone used for most Olmec monuments, may be the area where the Olmec sculptural style first developed. Heizer (1971: 53–4) notes that the major Olmec sites are located on an arc surrounding the northern edge of the Tuxtla Mountains (Fig. 1). This mountain zone is more attractive climatically and agriculturally than the adjacent lowland where most of the known Olmec sites are located. Although excavations in the Tuxtla mountain area have been limited, Olmec sculptures, such as the San Martín Pajapan monument and the Cerro el Vigía sculptures, have been discovered in the zone. On the other hand, recent reconnaissance excavations in the area have not produced evidence of an early Olmec occupation (Francesco Beverido, personal communication, 1971). But, as Coe (n.d.: 17) points out, Olmec sites in the Tuxtla Mountains would have been obliterated by volcanic activity that continued in the area through the eighteenth century. It is possible that some Early Formative sites remain undiscovered. In this respect, it is intriguing to know that a very fine hollow Olmec figurine, related to Early Formative types from San Lorenzo and the Central Highlands, was collected by Seler in the beginning of the century in the Tuxtla Highlands area (Lehmann 1921: Pl. 25).

If the Tuxtla mountain zone were the locus of origin for the Olmec sculptural style, it might explain why the Olmecs were willing to travel so far to import stone for sculpture.¹³ Clewlow (1970: 36–7) suggests that since no evidence of stone-carving workshops has been found at the major

¹³ Suitable stone for carving was available near the Olmec sites.

Olmec sites, and since there exist a number of paired or duplicate sculptures, monuments may have been carved in a central workshop located in the Tuxtla Mountains and dispatched to separate

Olmec sites. Possibly the earliest sites were located in the Highlands, and these sites may have continued to provide stone sculptures as the Olmec spread out from their original center.

Historical Implications

ALTHOUGH SOME ASPECTS of stylistic development can be attributed to the natural impetus for gradual change, there appear to be several points in the sculptural sequence that herald abrupt stylistic shifts, which may reflect unusual circumstances. This section attempts to explain what might account for the more radical forms of change evident in the proposed sculptural seriation.

Economic Factors

The Group II style appears to be standardized (perhaps even “mass produced”), and it is found much more widely distributed in the heartland than is Group I, suggesting there was a growing demand for Olmec art in the late Early Formative. Also, at this time, the Olmec sculptural style spread beyond the heartland to Pijijiapan and possibly to Ojo de Agua. Ultimately, economic factors may be linked to the spread of the Olmec style. A flourishing economy, based on widespread trading, may have increased the concentration of Olmec sites in the heartland in the late Early Formative, and may have resulted in the spread of Olmec art to other areas.

From the beginning of the San Lorenzo occupation, obsidian was imported from distant sources, such as Guatemala, Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico, and Puebla; these sources continued to be exploited throughout the San Lorenzo sequence, but a number of new sources (from Queretaro, Hidalgo, and Guatemala) first appear in the San Lorenzo B Phase (Cobean *et al.* 1971: 667, Table 1).

In the San Lorenzo B Phase, there is also a sharp increase in the importation of serpentine, believed to be from either the Isthmus zone, on the border of Oaxaca and Chiapas, or from Puebla and Guerrero (Coe 1968a: 94; 1970: 28; Heizer 1971: 56). If the Chiapas area were a source of serpentine in the late Early Formative, the Olmec sculptural style may have spread along trade routes to Pijijiapan, and later to other sites like Padre Piedra and Tiltepec. Trade routes to acquire jade in the Middle Formative may have led the Olmec along a similar route, since the suggested sources for Olmec jade are Guerrero and the Isthmus zone (Coe 1968a: 94; Heizer 1971: 56).¹⁴ Middle Formative trading for serpentine and jade in Chiapas may have resulted in a rather intimate connection between the heartland and Chiapas. Such a relationship seems to be evident in the art styles, particularly during the early Middle Formative, when there was apparently an interchange of artistic ideas between the two areas, reflected in southern influences on the Group III figural sculptures, and in the existence of reliefs from Chiapas that are related to those of the La Venta Group III style. It may also be that the strong southern influences in the Middle Formative Olmec style are the result of a historical event, rather than general economic ties.

¹⁴ Recently, a workshop with jade resembling Olmec blue-colored jade has been found in northern Costa Rica (Las Lilas); in any case, the trade route would have been along the Pacific Slope.

Southern Connections and Violent Upheaval

Although the Early Formative Olmec style seems to lack any trace of influence from other art styles, the Middle Formative style (Groups III and IV) appears to be related to southern art styles from Guatemala and Chiapas. Coe (1970: 28) notes that the cataclysm evident in the San Lorenzo sequence at the end of the San Lorenzo Phase was connected in part with the arrival of a new population identified with the following Nacaste Phase. Ceramics of the Nacaste Phase are considered to be related to southern ceramic complexes such as Chiapa II and Conchas I (Pacific Slope of Guatemala; Coe 1970: 28–9, 32). A comparable cataclysmic event in the La Venta sequence cannot be demonstrated at present, but Coe (1968b: 63) believes that monuments were destroyed at La Venta around the same time as at San Lorenzo, since they show an identical pattern of defacement. Furthermore, like the Nacaste Phase ceramics, Middle Formative La Venta ceramics appear to correlate with Chiapas II ceramics, and a particularly strong relationship is seen in pottery from Phase I and II caches of Complex A (Warren, in Sanders 1961: 51–2). A violent event may have disrupted Laguna de los Cerros at the end of the Early Formative. The analysis of material from preliminary excavations of Preclassic levels at Laguna de los Cerros suggests that monuments were mutilated and buried in San Lorenzo Phase deposits, and that possibly the site was abandoned at the end of the Early Formative.

Significantly, there is evidence at Chiapa de Corzo for a similar disruptive event at the end of the Early Formative. Green and Lowe (1967: 69–70) note that either Chiapa de Corzo was abandoned for a brief period at the end of the Chiapa I Phase, after which the Chiapa II population razed the site, or the Chiapa II peoples actually displaced the resident Chiapa I population and destroyed their structures. They believe that the Chiapa II peoples may have been an aggressive, war-like group. It is possible that an Olmec-acculturated southern group, already familiar with the heartland area through trade con-

tact in the late Early Formative, moved northward to the lowland region and contributed to the collapse of the Early Formative Olmec, establishing a new occupation that incorporated many of the earlier Olmec traditions, but adding southern elements to the ceramic complex and monumental art style.

It is interesting to note that many sculptures depicting aggression iconography appear to date to the end of the Early Formative and the Middle Formative (Figs. 23, 24, 25, 68, 69; Joralemon 1971: Figs. 259–62; de la Fuente 1973: Nos. 181, 206). Most often the confrontation appears to be between animals and human beings, but there appear to be a number of figures that may be warriors on reliefs believed to date to the early Middle Formative. These relief carvings possibly represent a new iconography formulated by an invading group. In any case, it seems that monumental art exhibits a more violent iconography beginning in the late Early Formative; this probably reflects disrupting influences in the Olmec culture.

Certain innovative aspects of the early Middle Formative La Venta relief style may have been related to ideas first developed in Chiapas (Pijijiapan).¹⁵ One important question in terms of the possible role of Chiapas in the development of the Middle Formative Group III relief style is: who carved the Olmec-inspired reliefs of Chiapas? Heizer (1971: 54) suggests that obsidian trade routes formed a network for the spread of Olmec ideas, and that itinerant Olmec carvers traveled along these routes to sites like Pijijiapan, Batehatón, Las Victorias, and Chalcatzingo. If this is the case, there would have been no real Olmec-acculturated population and Olmec influence would have been rather superficial. Bernal (1968: 136–7; 1969: 150, 167) thinks that the Olmec-related sites in Chiapas are Olmecoid, having their own strong culture, but

¹⁵ Stone 1 is particularly like the La Venta reliefs in depicting massive, planar figures in a compressed composition, but it shows overlapping figures, and lacks the rhythmic line of the La Venta reliefs, differences which could reflect regional and chronological variations.

accepting certain influences from the Olmec. Recently, possible evidence of an Olmec colony in Chiapas has been discovered. Lowe (n.d.) believes that the site of San Isidro in the Middle Grijalva Basin may have been an Olmec outpost commanding the trade routes between the Gulf Coast and the Central Depression of Chiapas. The ceramics of San Isidro closely parallel Early and Middle Formative Olmec ceramic components, and axially aligned offerings of jade and a stone celt mosaic resembling those of La Venta have been discovered at the site. This would seem to indicate that a resident population of Olmec occupied the site, and that some direct relationships with the Olmec were maintained over a long period of time. Nevertheless, the site appears to lack Olmec monumental sculpture.

Farther to the south, in the Upper Grijalva Basin (Chiapa de Corzo, Padre Piedra), the local population appears to have been more independent of Olmec influence. There is no direct evidence of an Olmec occupation in this zone, nor in the Pacific Slope where Pijijiapan, Ojo de Agua, Tiltepec, and Tzutzuculi are located; yet these are the areas where Olmec-related sculptures have been discovered. Pacific Slope sculptures seem to be inspired by Olmec models, but were probably carved by local artists, since they seem to preserve some local characteristics. Early Formative sculptures from Pijijiapan have a strong Olmec inspiration, but are flavored by a regional interpretation. The relief figure from Tiltepec (Fig. 51) recalls Group III reliefs, but the composition and surface treatment are more in keeping with the local carving style. On the other hand, the Padre Piedra Monument from the Central

Depression may have been carved by Olmec artists, since it so strongly resembles heartland reliefs.

It appears that the original impetus to carve monumental sculpture in Chiapas spread from the heartland Olmec. The earliest known monuments in the region reflect a strong Olmec influence. But, by the Middle Formative, a local style had developed that was somewhat independent of Olmec traits, and seems itself to have been a source of some elements in the figural sculpture of the Group III style. One anomalous La Venta sculpture (Monument 71: Fig. 73) appears to have been directly inspired by sculptures of Tiltepec and Tzutzuculi. Olmec influences in Chiapas continued in the Middle Formative, but the relationship appears to reflect on equal exchange of ideas. This more intimate relationship may have been the result of the movement of a population from Chiapas into the Olmec area.

Southern connections probably continued to the end of the Olmec occupation of La Venta (500–400 B.C.). Some Izapan traits are notable in the late Middle Formative (Group IV) La Venta relief style. The Izapan style is often dated, primarily on stylistic grounds, after the fall of the La Venta Olmec. But some elements characteristic of Izapan art developed earlier. Since these elements seem more in keeping with the Izapan style, and are certainly more frequent in that art style, it would appear that they spread northwards to the Olmec. The Proviencia Phase date of certain Izapan-style monuments overlaps late Middle Formative La Venta occupation, which would allow for a direct transmission of southern stylistic influences to the Olmec.

Reappraisal of Olmec Sculptural Chronology

TABLE II SUMMARIZES the chronological placement of the four major stylistic groups established for Olmec sculpture. The results of this seriation differ from previous analyses of Olmec sculptural chronology. Coe (1968b) believes that most Olmec sculptures, except certain La Venta relief carvings, date to the Early Formative. Clewlow (1974) thinks that some La Venta figural sculptures are Early Formative, contemporary with those of San Lorenzo and Laguna de los Cerros, but dates the majority to the Middle Formative. This study indicates that many of the figures in the round from La Venta date to the Early Formative (Groups I and II); however, there is a small body of La Venta figures that are Middle Formative (Group III). In general, relief appears to be the dominant mode of the Middle Formative.

Evidence for this seriation is drawn from stylistic appraisal and chronological correlations based on the archaeological record. Much of the archaeological evidence employed in the seriation has not been previously utilized in dating Olmec sculptures. The new evidence presented in this study includes: analysis of preliminary excavations of Preclassic levels at Laguna de los Cerros, stylistic correlations between sculptural motifs and archaeologically dated ceramic motifs, the recognition of the unique archaeological context of several Olmec monuments, and the analysis of stylistic relationships with sculptures from outside the heartland that have been dated by their archaeological context.

The chronological ordering of Olmec monuments opens the way for chronological studies of individual Formative Period themes, symbols, and

deities. Such a study would help to elucidate the origins of Mesoamerican religious concepts.

Although this study may have resolved some aspects of Olmec sculptural chronology, it also poses a number of unanswered questions. There are a few Olmec sculptures that do not fit into the established stylistic groups (Fig. 46; Pelliza n.d.: 130–5). Do these sculptures represent some unrecognized aspect of the Olmec style, or perhaps a distinct chronological epoch? More important, the origins of the style remain obscure, and the final phases of Olmec art are not well defined. It seems that the Olmec style did not disappear abruptly, but blended gradually with other Middle Formative styles to a point at which it was transformed and modified beyond the classic Olmec tenets. The classic Olmec style appears to have two aspects: the Early Formative style emphasizing sculpture in the round, and the early Middle Formative style focusing on relief. Few classic Olmec elements survive into the late Middle Formative; nevertheless, the Olmec heritage of these monuments is clear.

The most perplexing issue of Olmec sculptural chronology has not been resolved in this study, since it does not explain the sudden appearance of the florescent sculptural style. In fact, the proposed sequence presents a highly enigmatic situation. The earliest style recognized in this seriation is sophisticated and naturalistic, and clearly not the archaic base for the Olmec style. But this sequence is based on the evidence currently available, and it seems likely that the total range of Olmec sculptures is not yet known.

Table I
THE SAN LORENZO TENOCHTITLÁN SEQUENCE AND MESOAMERICA
(after Coe 1970)

		<i>San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán</i>	<i>La Venta</i>	<i>Central Chiapas</i>	<i>Guatemala– Chiapas Coast</i>	<i>Oaxaca</i>	<i>Valley of Mexico</i>
<i>Early Postclassic</i>	1200						
	1100	Villa Alta		Ruiz (XI)		Monte Albán IV(?)	Toltec
	900						
<i>Late Formative</i>	300 A.D.	Remplás		Guanacaste (V)	Crucero	↑	Ticomán
	400 B.C.	XXXX?XXX					
	500	Palangana	Phase IV	Francesa (IV)		Monte Albán I	Atoto– Cuautepec
<i>Middle Formative</i>	600	xxxxxxxx XXXXXX			Conchas 2		Totolica– La Pastora
	700	(Hiatus) XXXXXX	Phase III	Escalera (III)			
	800	xxxxxxxx	Phase II				
		Nacaste		Dili (II)	Conchas I	Guadalupe	Iglesia–El Arbolillo
	900						
<i>Early Formative</i>	1000	San Lorenzo B -----	Phase I	Cotorra (I)	Jocotal		
		San Lorenzo A			Cuadros	San José	Ixtapaluca
	1200	Chicharras					
	1300	Bajío				Tierras Largas	
	1400	Ojochi ?-----			Ocós		
					Barra	Matadamas	
	1500				↓ ?		

Table II
MAJOR SCULPTURAL GROUPS

	<i>Sculpted Figures</i>		<i>Relief</i>		
	<i>secure</i>	<i>tentative</i>	<i>secure</i>	<i>tentative</i>	
<i>Group IV</i>			LV Mons. 6, 13, 25, 26, 27, 63 LV Altar 7	TZ Stelae A, D	400 B.C.
<i>Group III</i>	LV Mons. 21, 40, 74, 75 LV Altar 6 TZ Mon. J	LV Mon. A Cerro el Vigía Mon. 3	LV Stelae 2, 3 LV Mons. 19, 42, 71		900 B.C.
<i>Group II</i>	LV Mons. 8, 9, 10, 11, 30, 73 LV Stela 1 SL Mons. 10, 12, 18, 37, 52 PN Mon. 2 Tenochtitlán Mon. 1 Arroyo Sonso San Martín Pajapan Cruz de Milagro Los Soldados Cuauhtotoloapan Viejo Rancho Los Idolos Mon. 1	LV Mons. 5, 39, 44 59, 70, 72 LV Altars 1, 2 SL Mon. 26 LC Mons. 13, 20 TZ Mons. I, M		SL Mons. 30, 58	1150 B.C.
<i>Group I</i>	LV Mons. 23, 31 LV Altars 4, 5 SL Mons. 11, 14, 34, 47 PN Mon. 1 LC Mons. 3, 5, 6, 11, 19	LV Altar 3 SL Mons. 20, 24 LC Mon. 28 PN Mon. 1	LV Altars 4, 5 SL Mon. 14	LV Altar 3	1250 B.C.
TZ = Tres Zapotes SL = San Lorenzo LV = La Venta LC = Laguna de los Cerros PN = Potrero Nuevo See de la Fuente 1973 for illustrations not included in this text.					

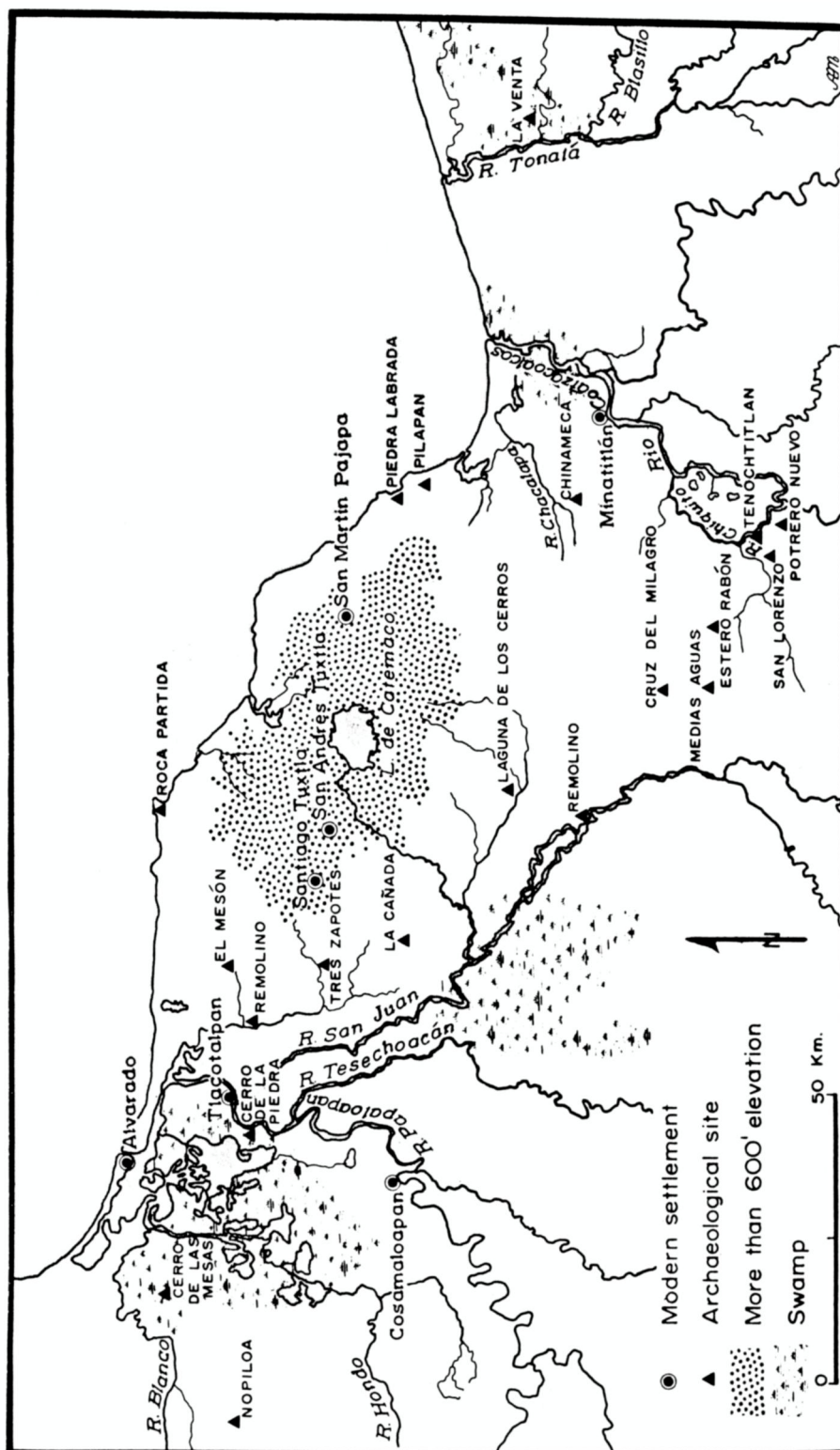




Fig. 2 (above) La Venta Monument 23 (after Drucker, Heizer, and Squier 1959: Pl. 52).



Fig. 3 Laguna de los Cerros Monument 6. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.

Fig. 4 (below) San Lorenzo Monument 47 (after Coe 1968b: Fig. 10).



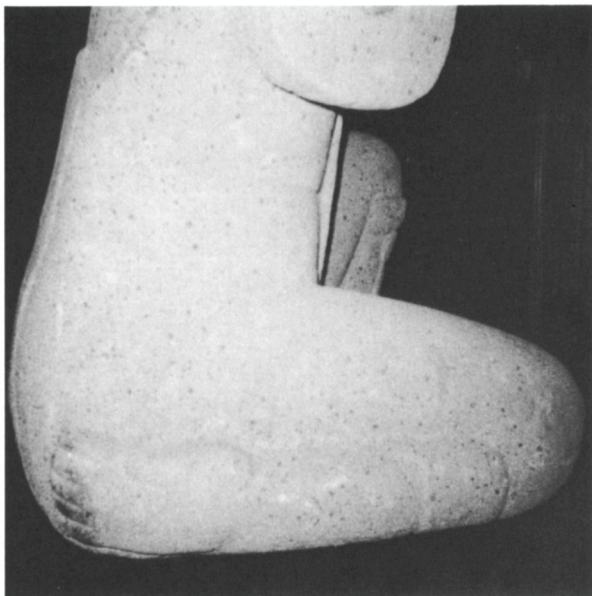
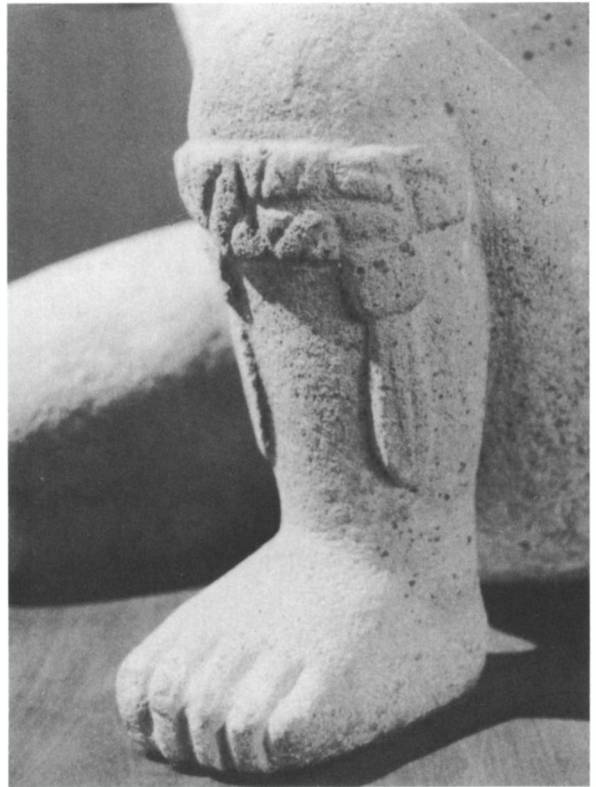


Fig. 5 (above, left) San Lorenzo Monument 34. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.

Fig. 6 (above) San Lorenzo Monument 34. Photo by the author.

Fig. 7 (left) San Lorenzo Monument 34. Photo by the author.

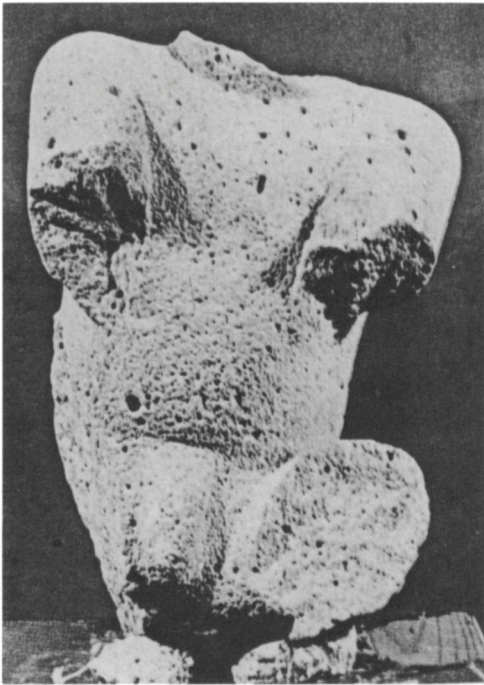


Fig. 8 Laguna de los Cerros Monument 3 (after de la Fuente 1972b: 15).



Fig. 9 Laguna de los Cerros Monument 3 (after Medellín Zenil 1960: Lám. 17).



Fig. 10 Laguna de los Cerros Monument 11. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.

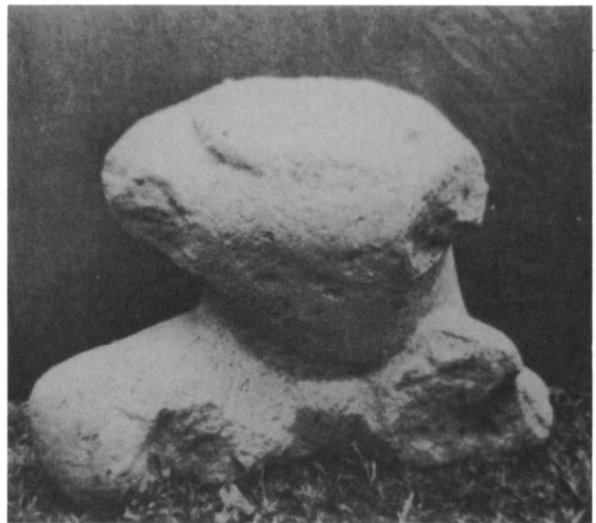


Fig. 11 La Venta Monument 31 (after Clewlow and Corson 1968: Pl. 9d).



Fig. 12 (left, above) San Martín Pajapan. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.



Fig. 13 (above) Cuauhtotoloapan Viejo. Photo by the author.



Fig. 14 (left, below) La Venta Monument 8 (after Williams and Heizer 1965: Pl. 3b).

Fig. 15 (below) La Venta Monument 10 (after photograph from Museo de Antropología de la Universidad de Veracruz, Jalapa).



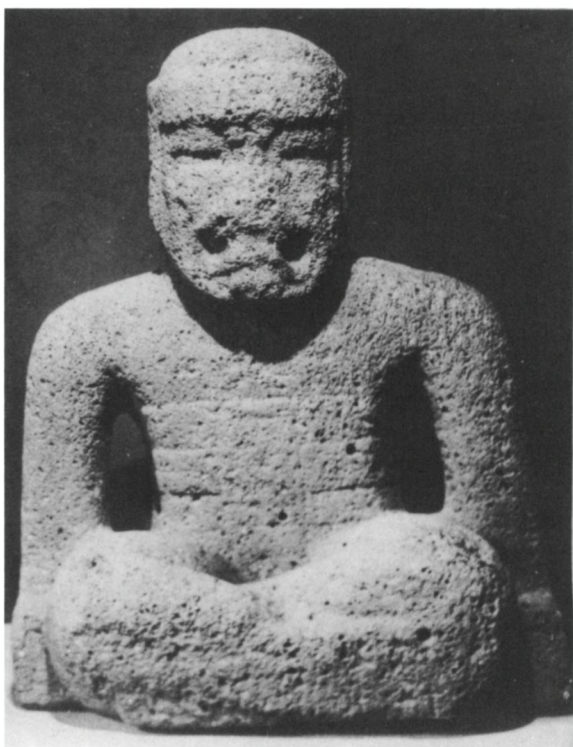


Fig. 16 La Venta Monument 9 (after photograph from Museo de Antropología de la Universidad de Veracruz, Jalapa).

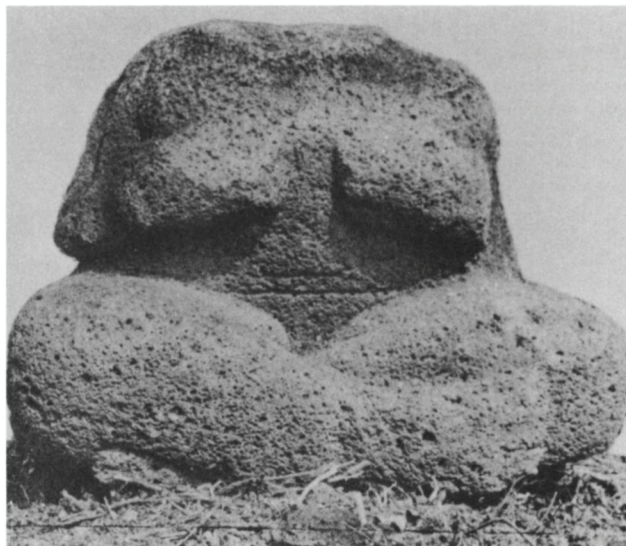


Fig. 17 Rancho Los Idolos Monument 1 (after de la Fuente 1973: Pl. 123).



Fig. 18 San Lorenzo Monument 12. Photo by Michael D. Coe.



Fig. 19 San Lorenzo Monument 37. Photo by Michael D. Coe.



Fig. 20 (above) Los Soldados (after Museum of Fine Arts, Houston 1963: Pl. 1).

Fig. 21 (above, right) San Lorenzo Monument 10 (after Stirling 1955: Pl. 15b).

Fig. 22 (right) San Lorenzo Monument 52. Photos by Michael D. Coe.



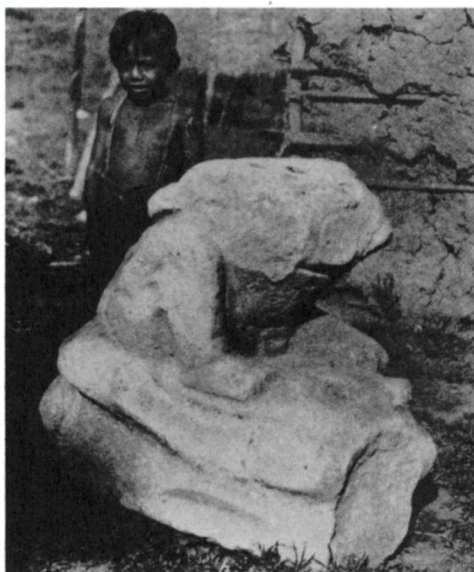
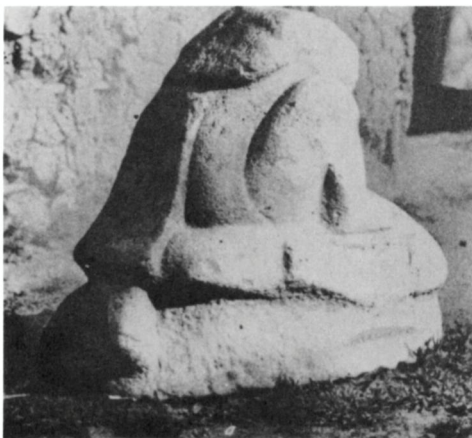


Fig. 23 Tenochtitlán Monument 1 (after Stirling 1955: Pl. 2).



Fig. 24 Laguna de los Cerros Monument 20 (after Medellín Zenil 1960: Lám. 28).

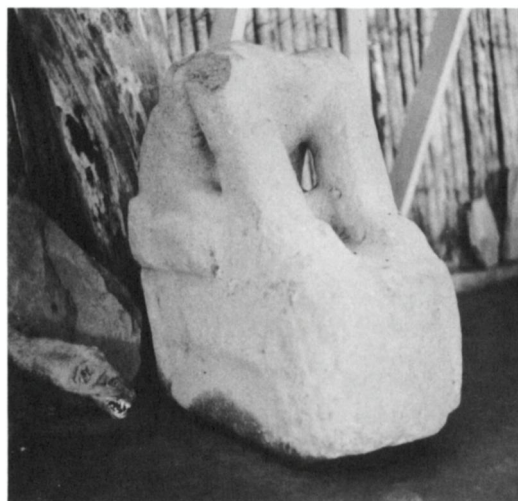


Fig. 25 La Venta Monument 75. Photo by the author.



Fig. 26 (left, above) La Venta Monument 40 (after Clewlow and Corson 1968: Pl. 11a).



Fig. 27 (above) La Venta Monument 21 (after Drucker, Heizer, and Squier 1959: Fig. 57).

Fig. 28 (left, below) La Venta Monument 74. Photo by the author.



Fig. 29 (below) Tres Zapotes Monument J (after Stirling 1943: Pl. 9c).





Fig. 30 (above) La Venta Altar 4. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.

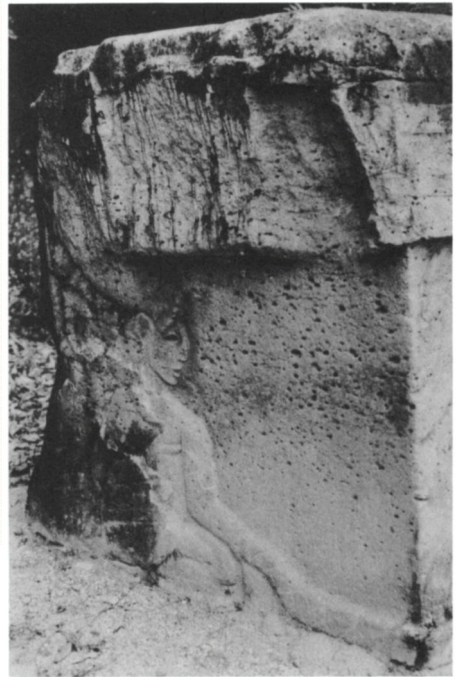


Fig. 31 (right, above) La Venta Altar 4. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.

Fig. 32 (below) La Venta Altar 5 (after Stirling 1943: Pl. 40).

Fig. 33 (right, below) La Venta Altar 5. Photo by the author.





Fig. 34 (left) San Lorenzo Monument 14. Photo by the author.

Fig. 35 (left, below) San Lorenzo Monument 14. Photo by the author.

Fig. 36 (below) San Lorenzo Monument 14. Photo by Michael D. Coe.





Fig. 37 (above) Laguna de los Cerros Monument 5 (after Medellín Zenil 1960: Lám. 19).



Fig. 38 (right, above) La Venta Altar 2 (after de la Fuente 1973: Pl. 2).

Fig. 39 (below) La Venta Altar 6. Photo by the author.

Fig. 40 (right, below) La Venta Stela 1 (after de la Fuente 1973: Pl. 8).





Fig. 41 (above) Potrero Nuevo Monument 2 (after Museum of Fine Arts, Houston: Pl. 5).

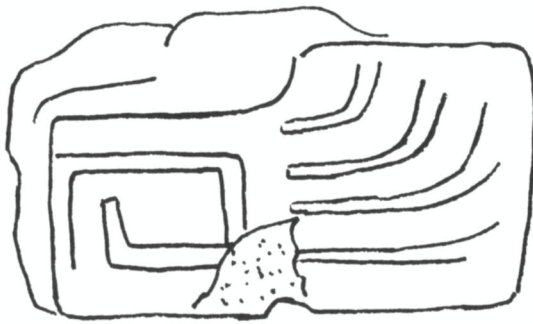


Fig. 42 (left) La Venta Altar 1. Drawing and photo by the author.

Fig. 43 (below) Laguna de los Cerros Monument 13. Drawings by the author.

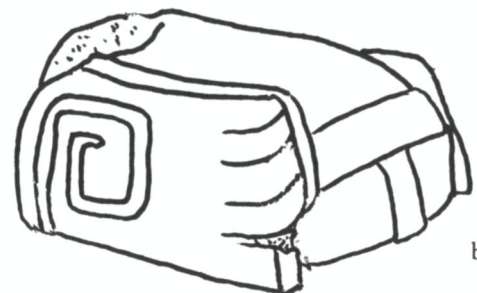
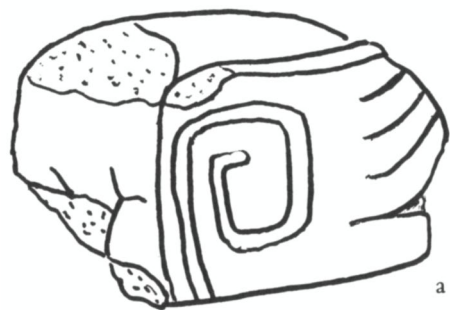
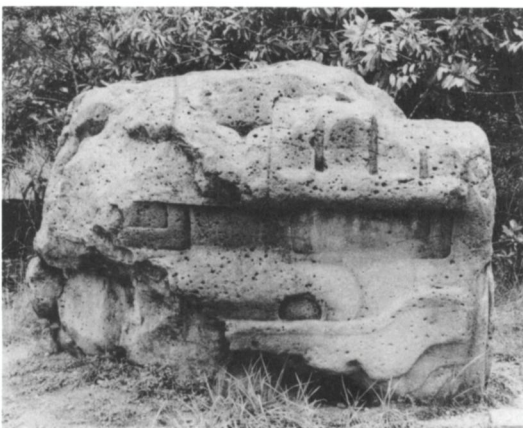




Fig. 44 La Venta Basalt Figure (after Drucker, Heizer, and Squier 1959: Fig. 63).



Fig. 45 Potrero Nuevo Monument I (after Stirling 1955: Pl. 24).

Fig. 46 San Antonio Plaza Monument. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.

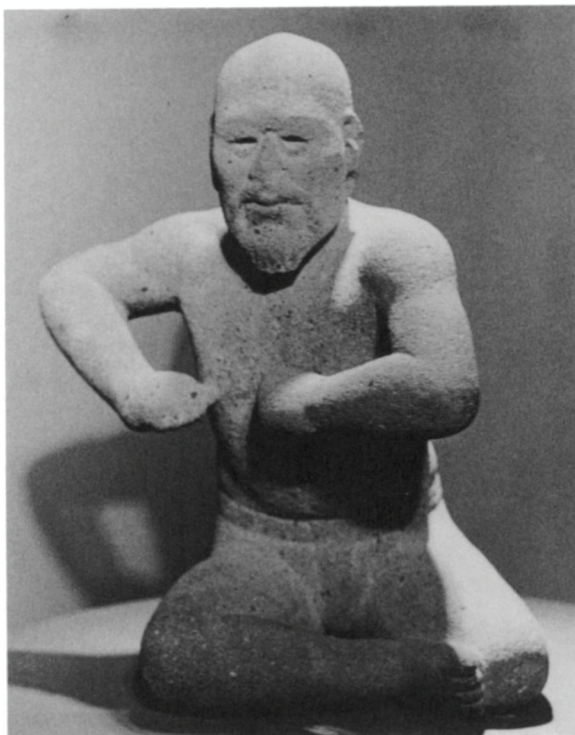


Fig. 47 San Antonio Plaza Monument, rear view. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.





Fig. 48 (left) Chalcatzingo, Morelos (after Cervantes 1968: Pl. 23).

Fig. 49 (below, left) Ojo de Agua, Chiapas (after New World Archaeological Foundation photograph; see Navarrete 1974: Fig. 19).

Fig. 50 (below, center) Tiltepec, Chiapas. Photo by the author.

Fig. 51 (below, right) Tiltepec, Chiapas. Photo by the author.



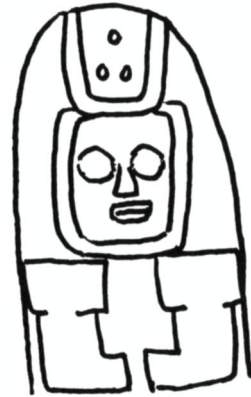


Fig. 52 (left, above) Tzutzuculi, Chiapas. Photo by the author.

Fig. 53 (top) Tiltepec, Chiapas. Drawing by the author.

Fig. 54 (above) Tiltepec, Chiapas. Photo by the author.

Fig. 55 (left) Tiltepec, Chiapas. Photo by the author.



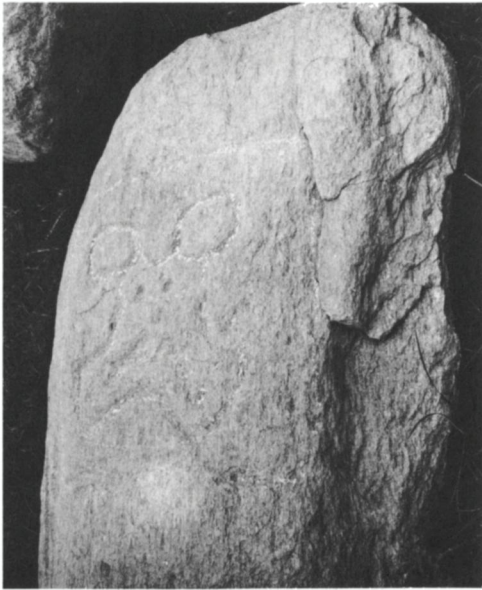


Fig. 56 (left, above) Tzutzuculi, Chiapas. Photo by the author.



Fig. 57 (above) Izapa Monument 2. Photo by the author.



Fig. 58 (left, below) San José Pinula, Guatemala (after Stone 1972: 69, left).

Fig. 59 (below) Figurine of unknown provenience. Photo courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington.



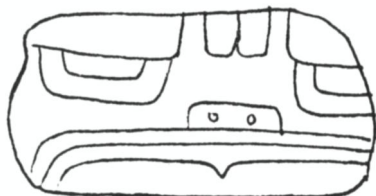
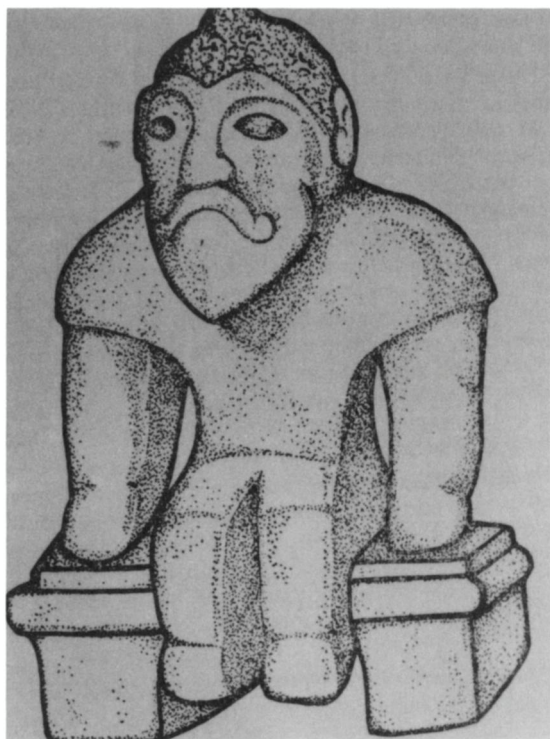
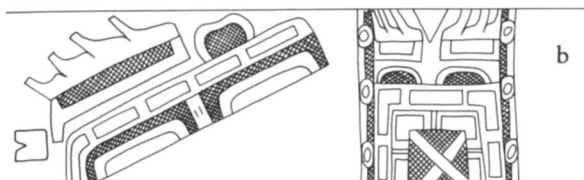


Fig. 60 (left, above) Río Arriba, Chiapas (after Navarette 1972: Fig. 3).

Fig. 61 (above) San José Pinula, Guatemala (after Easby and Scott 1970: Pl. 63).

Fig. 62 (left) San Lorenzo Phase Ceramics.

Fig. 63 (below) a. Tlatilco bowl (redrawn after Covarrubias 1957: Fig. 9). b. Tlapacoya bowl (after Joralemon 1971: Fig. 120).



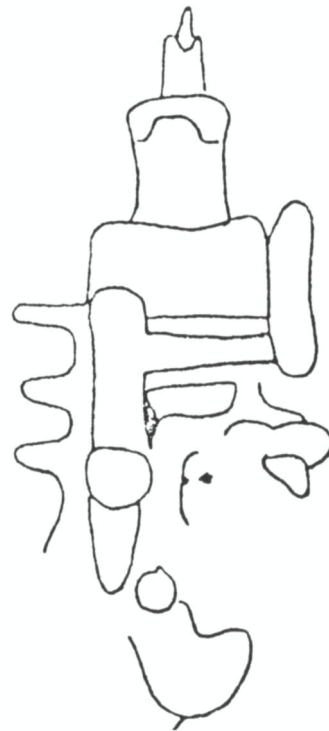
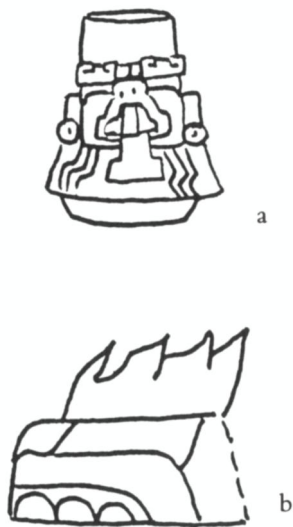


Fig. 64 (left, above) a. Monte Albán I urn (redrawn after Covarrubias 1946: Fig. 4). b. Detail of Laguna de los Cerros Monument 19. Drawings by the author.

Fig. 65 (above) Stone 2, Pijijiapan, Chiapas (redrawn after Navarette 1974: Fig. 6).

Fig. 66 (left) Stone 1, Pijijiapan, Chiapas (after Navarette 1974: Fig. 2).

Fig. 67 (below) Stone 2, Pijijiapan, Chiapas (after Navarette 1974: Fig. 5).

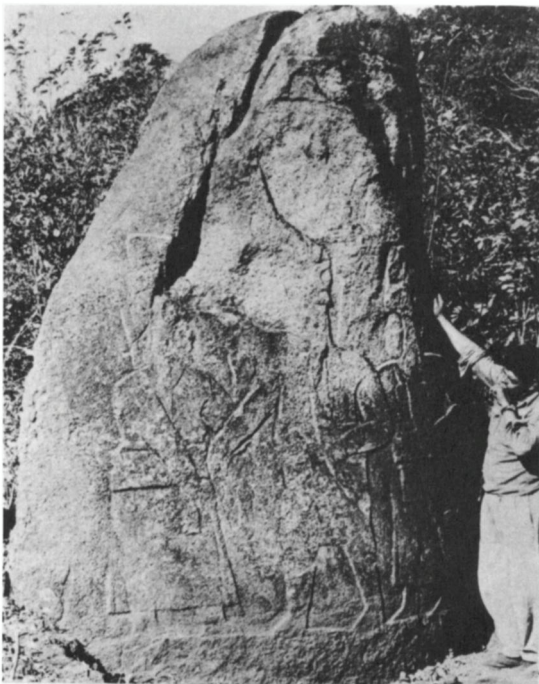




Fig. 68 (above) La Venta Stela 2. Photo by the author.

Fig. 70 (below) La Venta Monument 19. Photo by the author.



Fig. 69 (above) La Venta Stela 3 (after Drucker, Heizer, and Squier 1959: Pl. 55).



Fig. 71 (below) Chalcatzingo petroglyph. Photo by Patricia Garbe.



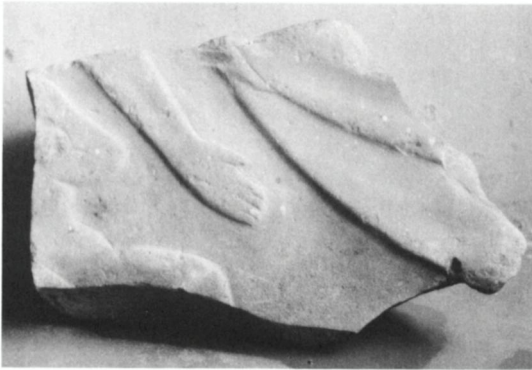


Fig. 72 (above) La Venta Monument 42. Photo by the author.



Fig. 73 (above) La Venta Monument 71 (after Stirling 1957: Pl. 50).

Fig. 74 (below) Viejón Stela 1. Photo by Elizabeth P. Benson.



Fig. 75 (below) Padre Piedra Monument 1 (redrawn after Navarette 1960: Fig. 11).

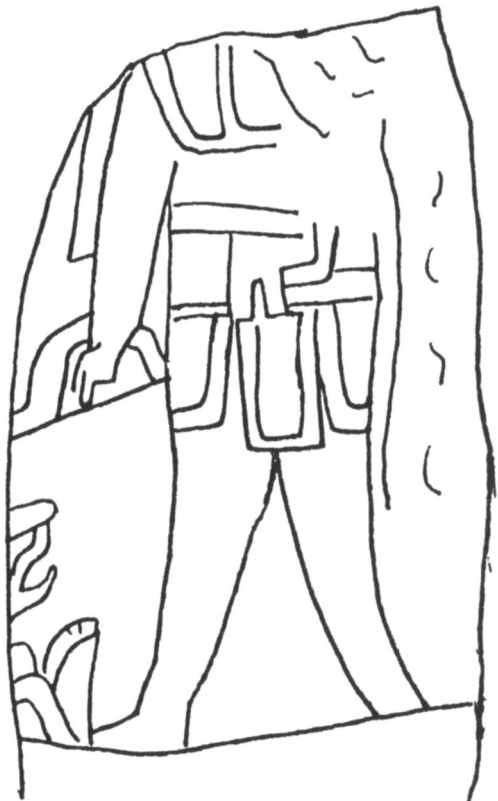




Fig. 76 (left) La Venta Monument 25 (after Drucker, Heizer, and Squier 1959: Fig. 59).

Fig. 77 (above) La Venta Altar 7. Drawing by the author.

Fig. 78 (below) a. Kaminaljuyú Stela 4. b. Izapa Stela 11 (redrawn after Miles 1965: Fig. 4). c. Kaminaljuyú Stela 19 (redrawn after Quirarte 1973: Fig. 11a).



a



b



c

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